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Home for the holidays

Collision-damaged USS McCain arrives at Yokosuka for repairs

By LEON COOK
Stars and Stripes

The USS John S. McCain is back at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, to receive repairs for damage suffered in a deadly Aug. 21 collision near Singapore.

Ten sailors were killed and five were injured when the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer crashed into an oil tanker

east of the Straits of Malacca.

The ship will undergo extensive maintenance at the U.S. Naval Ship Repair Facility and Japan Regional Maintenance Center the Navy said in a statement issued Nov. 28.

"[The facility] is making preparations to begin remediation and repair efforts immediately once the ship is dockside," Lt. Cmdr. Sandra Wyman, a Navy spokeswoman, said in the statement. "The project will be one of

the largest [the facility] has undertaken."

After the collision, the McCain sailed under its own power to Changi Naval Base, Singapore, where crewmembers, technicians and divers recovered remains, assessed damage and prepared the ship for travel by patching sections of the hull and performing maintenance on key systems.

SEE MCCAIN ON PAGE 4

The USS John S. McCain is lowered from the heavy lift transport MV Treasure on Wednesday in Tokyo Bay.

WILLIAM MCCAIN
Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Trump bets on Moore and suffers stinging defeat in Alabama

By JULIE PACE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Rarely has a sitting president rallied behind such a scandal-plagued candidate the way Donald Trump did with Alabama's Roy Moore. And rarely has that bet failed so spectacularly.

Moore's defeat Tuesday in Alabama —

ANALYSIS

as stalwart a Republican state as they come — left Trump unapologetic and his political allies shell-shocked. Trump had dug in on his support for Moore despite allegations the former judge engaged in sexual misconduct with teenagers when he was in his 30s, becoming one of the candidate's most ardent national supporters in

the race's closing days.

Out of the wreckage of Moore's defeat to Democrat Doug Jones, Trump faces mounting questions about the limits of his own political capital. He'll head into his second year in office with one fewer Republican senator, narrowing a margin already so slim that it has so far left him unable to push major legislation through Congress. Democrats,

who started the year as a deeply wounded minority party, press toward the midterm elections with a burst of momentum from the most unlikely of states.

To be sure, the Alabama race was highly unusual, and as with all special elections, there's no guarantee it will prove to be a barometer for contests a year from now.

SEE TRUMP ON PAGE 8

PACIFIC

Tillerson: US ready to talk 'anytime' with N. Korea

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Secretary of State Rex Tillerson appeared to remove a major roadblock to talks with North Korea, saying the United States was willing to meet with the nuclear-armed country "without preconditions."

Tillerson said President Donald Trump supports the position, which would reverse current and past administration policy that the U.S. won't sit down with the North unless denuclearization is on the table.

The White House said later that the president's views on North Korea have not changed.

Trump, who has previously undercut Tillerson, was silent on the issue on the format he usually turns to for foreign policy announcements — Twitter. He did, however, refer to North Korea as a "vile dictatorship" Tuesday as he signed a \$700 billion defense authorization bill.

Tillerson's remarks came two weeks after North Korea test-fired its most powerful missile, which experts said showed the potential to reach the U.S. East Coast.

"We are ready to talk anytime North Korea would like to talk. And we are ready to have the first meeting without preconditions," Tillerson said Tuesday in a speech at the Atlantic Council think tank in Washington.

He said the North would need to hold off on its weapons testing. The reclusive state has test-fired more than 20 missiles so far this year, including the ICBM launched on Nov. 29. It also conducted its sixth and most power-

ful nuclear test.

"Let's just meet and we can talk about the weather if you want to. We can talk about whether it's a square table or a round table if that's what you're excited about," Tillerson said. "But can we at least sit down and see each other face to face and then we can begin to lay out a map, a road map, of what we might be willing to work towards."



Tillerson

Meanwhile, Jeffrey Feltman, the U.N. political chief who recently visited Pyongyang, said senior North Korean officials told him "it was important to prevent war."

Feltman, a former American diplomat, said he stressed "the urgent need to prevent miscalculation and reduce the risk of conflict," during more than 15 hours of discussions with North Korea's foreign minister and other top officials.

He called on them to open communication channels, including suspended military hotlines, and "to start some kind of engagement, to start talking about talks."

"They did not offer any type of commitment to us at that point. They have to reflect on what we said with their own leadership," he told reporters after privately briefing the U.N. Security Council. "I think we've left the door ajar, and I fervently hope that the door to a negotiated solution will

now be opened wide."

The developments suggested movement in the effort to resume dialogue with North Korea amid fears that the crisis over its nuclear weapons program is pushing the adversaries to the brink of military conflict.

Talks about talks

Analysts said leader Kim Jong Un's declaration last month that North Korea had completed its nuclear force after the last ICBM test laid the groundwork for easing tensions.

North Korea insists its nuclear program is not up for negotiation but has been widely expected to pursue talks after achieving its goal of developing a nuclear weapon that could reach the U.S. mainland. Experts say it hasn't mastered all the technologies needed to deliver the weapon but is making faster-than-expected progress.

"The elements needed to begin dialogue are coming into view. Pyongyang and Washington seem to recognize that a diplomatic off-ramp is needed to avoid a catastrophic confrontation," said Suzanne DiMaggio, a scholar at the Washington-based New America Foundation.

"The goal of denuclearization should remain the long-term objective, but it needs to be set aside because it's currently not possible. It makes greater sense to focus on achievable goals," she said in an email.

DiMaggio, who has participated in secret talks with the North Koreans, said a starting point could be an agreement to freeze the North's nuclear and missile

programs in exchange for an adjustment in U.S.-South Korean military exercises.

The joint war games infuriate the North, which considers them a rehearsal for an invasion despite Washington's insistence that they're solely for defensive purposes. Media reports in recent weeks have said the allies are considering a delay in upcoming drills known as Key Resolve until after the Winter Olympics, which begin in February.

The secretary of state insisted the U.S. goal remained denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. But, he added, "It's not realistic to say we're only going to talk if you come to the table ready to give up your program. They've too much invested in it. The president is very realistic about that as well." Trump has said in the past he'd be willing to talk to Kim Jong Un under the right conditions. But he also has unleashed a string of fiery threats, saying he'll "totally destroy" North Korea if forced to defend the U.S. and its allies.

"The president's views on North Korea have not changed," White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said later in a statement. "North Korea is acting in an unsafe way not only toward Japan, China, and South Korea, but the entire world."

"North Korea's actions are not good for anyone and certainly not good for North Korea," she added.

In October, Trump tweeted that Tillerson was "wasting his time" trying to negotiate with North Korea after the secretary of state said the U.S. had backchannel communications with the reclusive state.

David Straub, a former State Department Korean affairs director, said he suspects that Tillerson was expressing his personal views and had not coordinated his statements with the White House.

Straub noted the North Koreans have used talks in the past to wring concessions from the West and said it would be a mistake to give them an unconditional seat at the table.

Straub, currently a visiting fellow at South Korea's Sejong Institute, said such a move would also jeopardize recent momentum in efforts to get other nations to help implement economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure aimed at isolating the North.

"It ignores decades of North Korea's behavior," he said. "I think that North Korea's main aim with its nuclear weapons program is to be able to fatigue the United States into accepting it as a legitimate nuclear weapons state."

Tillerson also said Washington has discussed with Beijing how North Korea's nuclear weapons might be secured in case of instability there — a rare admission that the two countries that backed opposing sides in the 1950-53 Korean War were discussing contingency plans.

"The most important thing to us would be securing those nuclear weapons that they have already developed and ensuring that nothing falls into the hands of people who we would not want to have it. We've had conversations with the Chinese about how that might be done," Tillerson said.

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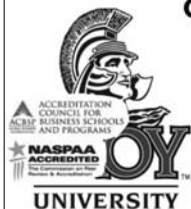
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PACIFIC



ANDRE PETERSON/Courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps

A U.S. Marine Corps CH-53E Super Stallion with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462 lands on Ie Shima island, Japan, on Oct. 31. A window from a Super Stallion fell from the sky and landed in an elementary school field Wednesday.

Window from Super Stallion falls onto Okinawa school playground

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A window from a Marine Corps CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter inexplicably fell from the sky Wednesday and landed on a field where schoolchildren were playing — the latest in a string of U.S. military aircraft mishaps on Okinawa.

The window hit the ground about 10:10 a.m. at Futenna Daini Elementary School, which is next to the fence line on the northern side of Marine Corps Air Station Futenna, said officials from the Okinawa Prefectural Board of Education and the Marine Corps. The piece measures approximately 3 feet by 3 feet.

There were 30 to 40 students on the field for physical education class at the time of the incident, a board of education spokesman said. A boy sustained a minor injury on the back of his hand after a small stone was sent airborne. There was no damage to school buildings.

Marine officials said the Super Stallion's crew "immediately" returned to Futenna and reported the incident.

"We take this report extremely seriously and are investigating the cause of this incident in close coordination with local authorities," Marine officials said in a statement Wednesday afternoon. "This is a regrettable incident and we apologize for any anxiety it has caused the community."

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga expressed concern during a press conference with reporters.

"An incident such as this not only gives concern to the people affiliated to the school but to the

people of Okinawa, and it should never happen," he said.

The Japanese government will continue to gather information and will notify local officials of their findings, said Suga, who vowed to take "appropriate measures."

State Minister of Defense Tomohiro Yamamoto met Wednesday with U.S. Forces Japan commander Lt. Gen. Jerry Martinez and requested that the U.S. military voluntarily refrain from flying Super Stallions.

Condemnation came swiftly from Okinawa's anti-base Gov. Takeshi Onaga.

"The fact that it fell right in the middle of the playground is terrible and unforgivable," he told reporters during a visit to the school, according to Japanese public broadcaster NHK. "The children are the ones that we have to protect the most. It has been repeated over and over again and I don't have the words to describe my feelings."

Protesters planned to rally at Ginowan City Hall on Wednesday night to call for the withdrawal of U.S. military bases from Okinawa. Organizers said they expect about 300 people to turn out.

"These incidents have been repeated over and over again; aircrafts crashing and dropping objects," a spokesman for The Okinawa Peace Activity Center said. "These [incidents] happen because there are bases [here] and Okinawan people are exposed to [this] danger."

The incident is the latest in a string of mishaps involving U.S. military aircraft on the southern island prefecture. Last week, a plastic part thought to belong to a U.S. military aircraft landed on the roof of a local day care, leading to demonstrations in front of

U.S. military facilities.

In October, a 1st Marine Aircraft Wing Super Stallion made an emergency landing in a farmer's field outside Okinawa's Northern Training Area after an inflight fire. The aircraft was an almost total loss.

At that time, local anxiety was already elevated after an MV-22 Osprey crashed last December in shallow water just off Camp Schwab on Okinawa and a deadly Osprey crash in August off the coast of Australia that claimed the lives of three Marines.

The latest incident is almost sure to embolden Okinawa's small but potent protest movement, which is backed by popular support and Onaga, and lead to renewed protests of both U.S. military aircraft and plans to relocate Marine air operations within the prefecture, from Futenna to Schwab in Okinawa's remote north.

Roughly half of the 50,000 U.S. troops based in Japan are stationed on the tiny southern island of Okinawa.

Okinawans have long complained of fears and anxiety regarding U.S. military aircraft operating from the island. Immediately after World War II, crashes were fairly common and claimed the lives of local civilians.

Coupled with crimes perpetrated by American servicemen in recent years, the incidents have fomented unrest and have been impossible for Japanese and U.S. officials to ignore.

Onaga was elected by a sizable margin in 2014 on a platform that called for blocking the Futenna relocation within the prefecture and the expulsion of the Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft from the island.

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Off-base drinking ban, curfew lifted for troops in Japan

BY LEON COOK
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The U.S. military has lifted alcohol restrictions and a midnight curfew for Japan-based service members imposed last month after a fatal vehicle accident on Okinawa.

"As of noon today, normal liberty and alcohol consumption policies are back in effect for U.S. military members located or operating in Japan," said an Air Force statement issued Wednesday.

The order reversed restrictions put in place Nov. 19 after Marine Lt. Nicholas James-McLean, 21, was involved in a head-on collision that killed a 61-year-old Okinawan man. The Marine was operating a government vehicle while off-duty and reportedly had a blood-alcohol content of 0.09 — three times Japan's legal limit.

All 50 U.S. states have set 0.08 as the legal limit for driving under the influence or driving while impaired.

The military responded by or-

dering a total alcohol ban and restricting off-duty Okinawa-based personnel to their quarters. The order was later amended to include a midnight-to-5 a.m. curfew for all Japan-based servicemembers.

Troops have been allowed to buy and consume alcohol on base or in their off-base homes since Nov. 30; however, the curfew and off-base drinking ban remained in place.

The return to normal liberty and alcohol policies means a 1-to-5 a.m. curfew for lower enlisted troops and a ban on off-installation drinking during those hours for all ranks.

On Monday, James-McLean was charged with negligent driving causing death and driving under the influence of alcohol, a spokesman from the Naha District Public Prosecutors Office said. He faces substantial fines and up to 10 years in prison with hard labor if convicted on both charges.

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Former base worker to appeal murder conviction

BY HANA KUSUMOTO
Stars and Stripes

TOKYO — A former U.S. base worker sentenced to life imprisonment earlier this month for the killing of a 20-year-old Okinawan woman wants to appeal the verdict.

Kenneth Franklin Gadson, 33, who was a civilian employee at a Kadena Air Base cable and internet provider at the time of his arrest last spring, submitted a petition of appeal Tuesday to the Naha Branch of Fukuoka High Court, his attorney, Toshimitsu Takaesu, told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday. Gadson "said he objects to the rendered judgment," Takaesu said.

Gadson, a former Marine, was found guilty Dec. 1 by the Naha District Court of murder, rape resulting in death and the illegal disposal of a body in the slaying of U.S. office worker Rina Shimabukuro. He had admitted to the rape and body disposal charges but denied he intended to kill her.

Shimabukuro disappeared after going out for a walk on the night of April 28, 2016. Gadson became a suspect after police spotted his SUV on security camera footage taken from where she went missing. Police said he admitted to strangling Shimabukuro and led

them to her body.

A panel of three judges and six jurors concluded that while Gadson may not have planned to kill Shimabukuro when he attacked her, that quickly changed after he struck her from behind and she screamed and fought back. Prosecutors had presented a statement Gadson gave to police admitting to strangling Shimabukuro and providing details of the attack.

Gadson told Takaesu that he doesn't remember what he told the police since he was under the influence of sleeping pills at the time of the confession due to a suicide attempt.

"He objects that the statement given soon after the arrest was accepted as evidence and that the murder charge was recognized" by the court, Takaesu said.

Gadson gave a written statement to the court saying he did not stab the victim after he attacked her but poked her with a knife to make sure she was dead before disposing of her body.

"He said he objects that the ruling accused him of lying and trying to support his argument in the statement he later gave," Takaesu said.

A court date for Gadson's appeal had not been set as of Wednesday, Takaesu said.

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MILITARY

McCain: Stricken ship in homeport to receive repairs

FROM FRONT PAGE

The McCain left Singapore Oct. 5 aboard the heavy lift ship MV Treasure heading for Yokosuka, but diverted to Subic Bay, Philippines, after a new crack was discovered on its starboard side.

At Subic Bay, extra support was added to the stricken vessel aboard the Treasure, which departed for Yokosuka on Nov. 28, the Navy said.

The ship arrived at Tokyo Bay on Dec. 5, but couldn't dock at nearby Yokosuka until the crew prepared it for a safe offload.

The vessel anchored near its sister ship, the USS Fitzgerald, which left Yokosuka on Dec. 8. It's bound for Ingalls Shipbuilding facility in Pascagoula, Miss., to repair damage caused by a June 17 collision with a container ship that killed seven of its sailors.

Although the McCain collision was deadlier, the ship suffered less damage, allowing it to be repaired at its homeport, officials said.

"Damage is less significant, impacted fewer systems compared with [Fitzgerald]," 7th Fleet spokesman Cmdr. Clay Doss previously told Stars and Stripes. "For example, there was no significant damage to the superstructure, which is more likely to require U.S.-based shipyard repairs."

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JOSHUA B. MORTENSEN/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS John S. McCain is towed from the heavy lift transport MV Treasure.

Navy apologizes for graffiti in air

The Wenatchee (Wash.) World,

OKANOGAN — The apology arrived Dec. 1.

"The U.S. Navy owes you, your parents and your students an apology for the unacceptable, obscene contrails that were created by one of my aircraft on November 16th," U.S. Navy Vice Admiral T.M. Shoemaker wrote to Okanogan Superintendent Richard Johnson. "I want to reassure you that this behavior is antithetical to our Navy's core values — it's not who we are and we absolutely do not condone this uncharacteristic behavior."

Johnson requested a written apology for the skywriting in the shape of male genitalia drawn in the sky above Omak and Okanogan. The image was fully visible above the school playgrounds.

His request was echoed by Omak Superintendent Erik Swanson and North Central Educational Service District Superintendent Michelle Price. Johnson said he "fully accepted" the apology. "It is always encouraging when one's concerns have been listened to and actions taken to prevent similar incidents," he said. "The respect we have always had for our armed services is fully restored."

He thanked state Sen. Shelly Short and U.S. Rep. Dave Newhouse for making sure the school district concerns were heard.

Shoemaker said he personally held accountable the aircrew responsible for the graffiti and addressed the issue to all the students "that this immature act was counter to our culture which values treating everyone with dignity and respect."

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MILITARY

General relieves wing commander at Scott Air Force Base

Associated Press

BELLEVILLE, Ill. — An Air Force general said he has lost confidence in a wing commander at Scott Air Force Base and relieved him of his command.

In a news release, Lt. Gen. Giovanni Tuck said he relieved Col. John Howard of command of the 375th Air Mobility Wing on Monday and that Col. W. Chris Buschur had taken over. The release does not explain why Tuck had "lost confidence in Howard's leadership and ability to continue serving in command."

The News-Democrat of Bel-

leville reached Howard by phone on Monday night but Howard told the paper he was asked not to comment.

The newspaper reported Wednesday that a spokesman for the 18th Air Force said Howard will take a job with Transportation Command, which provides transportation to other U.S. commands and other agencies.

Howard was to speak at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's fall commencement Saturday but a university spokesman says the school was notified that the base will send another colonel.

Fort Stewart soldier dies of injuries he received during live-fire training

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Fort Stewart soldier died Tuesday of injuries he suffered last week while participating in a nighttime live-fire training exercise on the coastal Georgia Army post, Army officials said Wednesday.

Sgt. Michael T. Trask died in a hospital in nearby Savannah from the injuries he sustained Dec. 6 during the training event, said Kevin Larson, a spokesman for Fort Stewart. The Army is investigating the incident and declined to provide any additional details, including how Trask was injured, Larson said in a prepared statement.

Trask, 31, was an infantryman assigned to the 3rd Infantry Division, according to the Army. He was a veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and had



Trask

been assigned to Fort Stewart since December 2015. He is survived by his wife.

Lt. Col. Justin Harper, the commander of Trask's battalion, called Trask an "outstanding soldier" who helped teach the soldiers around him.

"His experience and personal example were instrumental in developing his unit into a cohesive team," Harper said in a prepared statement.

Trask was posthumously promoted to sergeant, according to the Army.

His death was at least the second of a soldier this year that occurred during a live-fire training exercise.

Army Spc. Matthew R. Turcotte was shot and killed in August during a nighttime combined-arms, live-fire training exercise at Fort Carson in Colorado. Army officials described the incident as accidental and said at the time that the service was investigating. The results of that investigation have not been released to the public.

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Navy evaluates options for Red Hill fuel tanks

HONOLULU — The U.S. military has prepared detailed evaluations for six options to prevent leaks from 20 large fuel tanks in Honolulu. The tanks at Red Hill date to World War II and sit atop an important aquifer.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Hawaii state Department of Health say the Navy submitted the analysis last week. A public workshop to discuss the report will be held in the spring.

Options include restoring existing tanks, lining the tanks and installing tanks within tanks.

The report doesn't include cost estimates or recommend a specific alternative.

Norovirus closes child care at Florida base

HURLBURT FIELD, Fla. — An Air Force installation in Florida has closed its child care centers

due to an outbreak of norovirus.

In a Facebook post, Hurlburt Field officials said its youth center and three child development centers would remain closed until Monday "in an abundance of caution to prevent the continued spread of illness."

A Northwest Florida Daily News report says 1st Special Operations

Wing Commander Col. Thomas Palenske said over 40 cases of norovirus had been reported by Friday at the installation that's the headquarters of the Air Force Special Operations Command.

Norovirus is a contagious virus that causes stomach pain, nausea and diarrhea.

From The Associated Press

Festival of Trees



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MILITARY

Army IDs soldier killed in Afghanistan accident

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Pentagon on Tuesday identified a soldier who was killed in a vehicle incident in eastern Afghanistan this week.

Staff Sgt. David Thomas Brabander, 24, of Anchorage, Alaska, died Monday from injuries sustained in a noncombat vehicle accident in Nangarhar province, the Pentagon said in a statement.

Brabander was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, based at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

"Just yesterday, we were reminded of the constant danger our United States, coalition and Afghan partners are in every day here



Brabander

March 2012 and was assigned to U.S. Army Alaska in November 2015 after previously serving in Hawaii, the command said in an emailed statement. A squad leader, he deployed to Afghanistan with the brigade in September.

Two other servicemembers wounded in

in Afghanistan," Brig. Gen. Lance Bunch, chief of future operations at the U.S.-led NATO mission in Afghanistan, told reporters earlier Tuesday. "We send our most heartfelt condolences to his family."

Brabander, an airborne infantryman, enlisted in the Army in 2007.

what officials have described as a "vehicle incident" were taken to a medical facility for treatment of non-life-threatening injuries, Bunch said. Six others in the vehicle were being evaluated for possible traumatic brain injuries.

The death is the fourth noncombat fatality of a U.S. servicemember supporting the Afghanistan mission this year, including one at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

There have been 11 U.S. combat deaths in the country this year — seven in Nangarhar province where U.S. troops are supporting Afghan forces battling a local branch of Islamic State — and two other coalition combat fatalities.

Not much is known about the accident, which Afghan media described as a "traffic incident," based on the military statement.

A provincial official in Nangarhar province said earlier Tuesday that no traffic accidents involving Americans had been reported and that the U.S. had not informed them about the event.

The Pentagon said it is investigating.

Troops with 3rd Battalion were in eastern Afghanistan supporting 10th Special Forces Group and their Afghan partners, according to a unit newsletter posted to Facebook earlier this month.

Some platoons supporting the Green Berets were spending up to three weeks at remote outposts and all had conducted combat operations during the month of November, the newsletter said.

Zubair Babakarkhal contributed to this report. garland.chad@stripes.com
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PHOTOS BY MARTIN EGNASH/Stars and Stripes

Soldiers with the Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment drop off toys to 1st Sgt. Jennifer Langes, left, dressed as Santa Claus, after the holiday Family Fun Run and Toy Drive at Vilseck, Germany, on Wednesday.

Soldiers, families to donate toys

By MARTIN EGNASH
Stars and Stripes

VILSECK, Germany — Soldiers and family members of the Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment had a festive physical training session Wednesday, when they ran in formation with toys inside their backpacks to donate to a German orphanage.

More than 100 soldiers and family members ran during the Family Fun Run and Toy Drive, bringing in piles of toys to be donated to the Kinderdorf Orphanage.

Many of the soldiers and families ran about a mile wearing Santa Claus costumes in addition to their Army-issued "assault packs" stuffed with toys.

"It wasn't really supposed to be a strenuous (physical training). It was about camaraderie, and doing the right thing," said 1st Sgt. Jennifer Langes, with 2CR's 4th Squadron.

The event was organized by the Sergeant Morales Club, U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria.

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Soldiers drink hot cocoa after the run.

Actor's group offers \$10K prize to top military playwright

By DAN STOUTAMIRE
Stars and Stripes

WIESBADEN, Germany — Aspiring playwrights in or formerly in the military now have thousands of reasons to put their ideas on paper.

Arts in the Armed Forces, the nonprofit organization of actor Adam Driver — who portrays arch-villain Kyle Ren in the latest pair of "Star Wars" films — is putting up a \$10,000 prize, known as the Bridge Award, for the best full-length play written by a current or former servicemember, with submissions due before March 1.

"There's no reason to think that this community doesn't have anything to say," Driver said in an interview with The New York Times last month. "Maybe they don't have access to another way of saying it."

All full-length, unpublished



Driver

plays — which need not have a military theme — will be considered by a group of judges that will include Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Suzan-Lori Parks.

In addition to the \$10,000 prize, the winner will be able to see their play performed by professional actors next fall, either in New York or on their military base if they are on active duty. The winner will also receive an award at the ATTAF Broadway show in November.

More information is available at <http://altaf.org/the-bridge-award/>.

Driver, who joined the Marines shortly after the Sept. 11 attacks and served for just under three years before being medically discharged, has long been an ardent supporter of arts in the military. His nonprofit group seeks to bridge the divide between "military and civilian, servicemember and family member, the world of the arts and the world of practical action," according to its website. It will celebrate its 10th anniversary next year.

stoutamire.dan@stripes.com

Mistrial declared in Navy officer's case

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — A deadlocked jury led to a mistrial Tuesday in the case of a former Navy commander charged with trying to rape a junior officer in San Diego.

The judge declared a mistrial after jurors voted 11-1 to convict John M. Neuhart II of attempted rape and assault with intent to commit rape.

Prosecutors said they may retry him.

Neuhart was charged with assaulting a Navy lieutenant at her San Diego home last fall. She had

worked under his command in a helicopter squadron in Guam.

Both sides acknowledged that the woman was intoxicated after drinking heavily with Neuhart earlier at a hotel bar. But the officer testified that Neuhart then forced his way into her Valencia Park home and attacked her, only stopping when her screams alerted a neighbor. Neuhart ran out a back door and was caught by police after he fell and broke a leg.

Neuhart has been relieved of his command but remains in the Navy.

WAR ON TERRORISM

Men due to leave Gitmo under Obama still there

Associated Press

GUANTANAMO BAY NAVAL BASE, Cuba — Abdellatif Nasser got what he thought was the best news possible in the summer of 2016: One of his lawyers called him at the Guantanamo Bay detention center and told him that the U.S. decided he no longer posed a threat and could go home to Morocco.

The prisoner allowed himself to get excited, to think about the Moroccan food, imagining he would be home in no time. "I've been here 14 years," he said at the time. "A few months more is nothing."

But his optimism turned out to be misplaced. A diplomatic agreement that would have allowed him to go free was not returned by Morocco until Dec. 28, eight days too late to meet a deadline to be among the last prisoners to leave under President Barack Obama.

Now, he is one of five prisoners who the U.S. cleared to go but whose freedom is in doubt under President Donald Trump.

"We had hoped until the last moment that he might still be released," said Shelby Sullivan-Bennis, the lawyer who told him about his pending release and shared her notes from the conversation. "When it didn't happen we were crushed. That eight-day fumble has turned into a potential lifetime of detention."

The Trump administration has not released any prisoners and not added any to the list of cleared men who can go home, or to a third country, for resettlement. There were 197 transferred out under his predecessor and more than 500 under President George W. Bush.



Nasser

Obama sought to close the detention center but was thwarted by Congress because of objections over transferring any of the remaining detainees to facilities in the U.S.

"It is entirely unprecedented for an administration to take the position that there will be no transfers out of Guantanamo without regard to the facts, without regard to individual circumstances," said Pardiss Kebriaei, a detainee attorney with the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights.

The administration has not announced its policy toward the detention center. But Trump said on Twitter before he took office that there should be no further releases from "Gitmo," as it's often called. "These are extremely dangerous people and should not be allowed back onto the battlefield," he said.

Air Force Maj. Ben Sakrison, a Pentagon spokesman for issues related to Guantanamo, said detainee case files will still be reviewed on a periodic basis but the government "is still considering whether or not to transfer detainees."

A National Security Council spokeswoman, Tara Rigler, noted that the president has said the detention center will "remain an available option in the war on terrorism." She said he will make any decisions related to detainees "on a case-by-case basis and in the best interest of the United States" but she declined to go into further detail.

The 41 remaining prisoners include the five approved for transfer and 10 who have been charged by military commission. That leaves 26 in indefinite confinement who could potentially be reviewed and added to the cleared list.

Several may still be prosecuted and are unlikely to be set free, but lawyers for the rest are considering filing new legal challenges, arguing that a policy of no releases would mean their confinement can no longer legally be justified as a temporary wartime measure.

Senators urge Congress to revise war authorization

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — As global threats to the United States escalate, Congress will need a new war authorization to remain relevant in current and future military engagements, a Senate panel said Wednesday.

The hearing was one in a series of committee hearings held in the last several months to re-examine, and potentially reign in, the president's authority to use military force, or AUMF, powers.

On Wednesday, some lawmakers signaled President Donald Trump's administration appears to be running amok as far as such war powers are concerned.

"The Trump national security team is greatly expanding the deployment of U.S. military forces on the ground worldwide with minimal congressional consultation, minimal buy-in from the American people ... and minimal transparency," said Sen. Ben Cardin of Maryland, the committee's ranking Democrat.

The president's current war powers were issued in 2001 after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and in 2002 when the United States went to war in Afghanistan and Iraq. The 2001 and 2002 AUMFs gave the president wide-ranging authority to direct the military to fight terrorist groups such as al-Qaida, the Taliban and Islamic State around the world.

Since that time, the military has operated under those authorizations in more than a dozen countries.

"We need to write new (war) authorization ... to make legal for Congress to weigh in on what the administration is already doing, to make us relevant," said Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., the committee chairman. "It's kind of an odd thing."

Concern about the current war authorizations has been debated for years, but it has reached a fevered pitch in recent months in light of recent, deadly military encounters, such as the attack in Niger on Nov. 4 that left four soldiers dead and the rising tensions with North Korea.

Trump "might even seek a nuclear-first strike, ... and we would have to rely on the strength, character and bravery of those with the military responsibility for carrying out that attack to question its legality," Cardin said about North Korea. "We have a president who has a reckless self-confidence of his own instincts and makes decisions without relying on his own advisers."

'We need to ... make legal for Congress to weigh in on what the administration is already doing, to make us relevant. It's kind of an odd thing.'

Sen. Bob Corker
R-Tenn.

Stephen Hadley, national security adviser for former President George W. Bush, testified Wednesday that the White House and Congress should already be in talks to address the North Korea military strategy, if one is to be executed.

"The North Korea situation is so grave that Congress and the president should be having conversations now, and continuing," he said.

Hadley and John Bellinger III, former national security council attorney for the Bush administration, agreed Congress could pre-empt presidential military action against North Korea by issuing a new war authority and setting parameters for any potential encounter.

"The war powers resolution is outdated," Bellinger said. "And it should be revised."

How the war authorizations should be revised remains a question.

Several House and Senate members have proposed a variety of approaches, as less than one-third of the Congress serving today was involved in the current war authorizations.

Among the proposals, some lawmakers have said it's time to replace the president's war powers authorization with one that has time or geographical limits.

Still, Christine Wormuth, former undersecretary of defense for former President Barack Obama, warned transparency remains critical, especially as the military effort expands around the world.

"I personally worry that the U.S. military has been carrying a very heavy burden for many years now," she said. "And that an imbalance has crept into how we address foreign policy challenges."

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NATION

Unusual alliance yields Ala. upset

By BILL BARROW
Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Democrat Doug Jones assembled an unusual Deep South alliance to claim a Senate seat Tuesday in Republican-dominated Alabama, combining strong turnout among blacks and white liberals with enough crossover support from conservatives who couldn't stomach scandal-ridden Republican nominee Roy Moore.

Among those disaffected GOP voters was the state's most powerful Republican, Sen. Richard Shelby, who very well may have handed Jones his victory margin of about 1.5 percentage points.

The six-term senator made a late campaign push of declaring he couldn't vote for Moore, an evangelical populist, after allegations from multiple women who said the 70-year-old molested or sexually pursued them decades ago, when they were in their teens and Moore was in his 30s.

Shelby, who was the last Democrat to win a Senate seat from Alabama in 1992 before switching parties two years later, declared the charges credible, despite Moore's denials, and the senior senator said he'd write in another Republican. Incomplete returns showed that about 1.7 percent of the more than 1.3 million Alabama voters did the same thing, almost certainly denying Moore votes that would have gone to any other Republican.

The result, driven also by surprisingly high turnout for a holiday season special election, upended the partisan splits in a state President Donald Trump won by 28 percentage points just 13 months ago. Republicans hold every other statewide office and six of seven U.S. House seats and they dominate the state Legislature.

Jones, 63, a former U.S. attorney, will



JOHN BAZEMORE/AP

Doug Jones, a Democrat, won election to the U.S. Senate from Alabama on Tuesday. Republicans hold every other statewide office and six of seven U.S. House seats.

take the seat held previously by Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

Jones closed Democrats' usual gap by posting wide margins in the state's four most populous counties that fall along the Interstate 65 corridor, from Mobile County on the Gulf Coast to the NASA hub of Madison County near the Tennessee border. He also dominated the counties of the Black Belt, named for the color of its soil, and added wins in the counties of the state's two largest college campuses, the University of

Alabama and Auburn University. Jones also narrowed GOP advantages in several other counties, though Moore dominated in many small towns and rural areas where his evangelical appeal is strongest.

The pattern copied the second of Moore's statewide victories for Alabama chief justice — but in that 2012 race, the Republican managed to survive with a 4-point victory. This time, voter turnout tended to be higher in Jones' strongholds than in Moore's.

Lieutenant governor named to fill Franken seat

By KYLE POTTER
Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton appointed Lt. Gov. Tina Smith on Wednesday to replace Sen. Al Franken until a special election in November, setting up his long-time and trusted adviser for a potentially bruising 2018 election.

Smith was widely seen as Dayton's top choice from the moment Franken announced his resignation last week, and she said she would run in the November special election to complete Franken's term through 2020.

"I will run in that election and I will do my best to earn Minnesotans' support," she said at the news conference where Dayton announced her appointment.

Smith had previously declined to run for governor, raising questions about whether she would launch a Senate campaign that would be in the national spotlight. But Dayton was under pressure from fellow Democrats in Washington to ensure his pick would use the appointment as a springboard for the November election.

It's not clear when Smith will head to Washington. Franken, who resigned under pressure from his own party after he was accused of improper behavior by at least eight women, announced last Thursday that he would resign "in the coming weeks." His office said Tuesday that he had not yet set a final departure date.

The appointment won't change the balance of power in the Senate; both Franken and Smith are Democrats.

Smith, 59, served as Dayton's trusted chief of staff for four years before ascending to become his No. 2 when he needed a running mate in 2014. Dayton has long treated her as an equal in the office, and it was that deference that fueled speculation she was being groomed to succeed him.

Next year's race to fill the final two years of Franken's term is certain to be one of the nation's most closely watched and expensive. Republicans immediately floated former two-term Gov. Tim Pawlenty as a possible candidate, but many others were said to be weighing a run.

Smith may have competition from her own party as well, with several Democrats who had hoped to succeed Dayton likely to eye the Senate race. And her past work with Planned Parenthood in Minnesota and other Midwestern states, where she served as an executive, was sure to become a flashpoint with Republicans on the campaign trail.



Smith

Trump: President, Bannon unable to get Moore elected

FROM FRONT PAGE

A perfect storm of controversies helped Jones overcome Alabama's strong Republican bent, most notably the sexual misconduct allegations that surfaced against Moore. The matter left the Republican Party deeply divided over whether holding a Senate seat was worth the potential long-term risks of supporting Moore.

Some Republicans did pull their support from Moore after the allegations surfaced, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and the National Republican Senatorial Committee. Many more GOP officials in Washington privately preferred the prospect of a Moore defeat over having to deal with daily questions about his actions and the possible cloud of a Senate ethics investigation hanging over the party.

But Trump is the Republican Party leader, and he jumped in with both feet. In a moment of national reckoning over sexual misconduct, where hardly a day passes without a prominent man being ousted from a powerful position, the president

made it impossible for the GOP to disassociate itself from Moore and the accusations swirling around him.

By Wednesday, Trump was on the defensive, reminding his followers that he had originally endorsed Moore's Republican primary opponent, Sen. Luther Strange.

"I said Roy Moore will not be able to win the General Election. I was right!" Trump wrote in a pre-dawn tweet. "Roy worked hard but the deck was stacked against him!"

Trump's track record of late has indeed been worrisome for Republicans weighing how closely to align themselves with the president in the midterms, where control of Congress will be at stake. Last month, the Trump-backed Republican gubernatorial candidate in Virginia lost in a race that wasn't close. The president now has the dubious distinction of picking wrong twice in Alabama, a state he won by 28 points just over a year ago. His first blemish came during the state's Senate primary, when he backed Strange.

Moore's victory over Strange pushed

Trump back to the roots of his presidential campaign. He realigned himself with Steve Bannon, his chief strategist during the 2016 race and in the White House until he was ousted in a staff shakeup earlier this year. Bannon was one of Moore's most prominent supporters from the start and viewed the contest as a ripe opportunity to press forward in his goal of disrupting the Republican Party.

More traditional Republicans have long warned that Bannon's chosen candidates signal disaster for the party and will struggle to defeat Democrats in competitive states.

The president, meanwhile, seems more naturally attuned to other political outsiders and is well-awake that his command over a sizable swath of the GOP primary electorate makes him a powerful player in determining the party's direction in upcoming elections. Whether he can transfer his own political good fortunes to those candidates remains the unanswered question.

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Jack Ryan is dealing with an aggressive challenge from the Chinese government. Pavens are being moved around a global chessboard: an attack on an oil platform in Africa, a terrorist strike on an American destroyer and a storm tossed American spy ship that may fall into Chinese hands. But there are hints that there's even more going on behind the scenes.



NATION

Agent removed from Russia probe called Trump an 'idiot'

BY SADIE GURMAN
AND ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Two FBI officials who would later be assigned to the special counsel's investigation into Donald Trump's presidential campaign described him with insults like "idiot" and "loathsome human" in a series of text messages last year, according to copies of the messages released Tuesday.

One of the officials said in an election night tweet that the prospect of a Trump victory was "terrifying."

Peter Strzok, a veteran FBI counterintelligence agent, was removed over the summer from special counsel Robert Mueller's team following the discovery of text messages exchanged with Lise Page, an attorney lawyer who was also failed this year to the group of agents and prosecutors investigating potential coordination between Russia and Trump's Republican campaign.

Hundreds of the messages, which surfaced in a Justice Department inspector general investigation of the FBI's inquiry into Democrat Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server, were being provided to congressional committees, which had requested copies, and were reviewed by The Associated Press on Tuesday night.

The existence of the text messages, disclosed in news reports

earlier this month, provided a line of attack for Trump, who used the revelation to disparage FBI leadership as politically tainted. Republicans have also seized on the exchange of texts between two officials who worked for Mueller to suggest that the team is biased against Trump and its conclusions can't be trusted.

The issue was likely to be a focus of a congressional hearing Wednesday involving Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who appointed Mueller as special counsel in May and oversees his team's work.

The messages — 375 were released Tuesday evening — cover a broad range of political topics and include an exchange of news articles about the race, often alongside their own commentaries.

There are some derogatory comments about Democratic officials, but some of the harshest comments are reserved for Trump.

In a March 4, 2016, back-and-forth provided to Congress, Page refers to Trump as a "loathsome human" and Strzok responds, "Yet he may win." After Strzok asks whether she thinks Trump would be a worse president than fellow Republican Ted Cruz, Page says, "Yes, I think so."

The two then use words like "idiot" and "awful" to characterize Trump, with Strzok saying, "America will get what the voting public deserves."

House, Senate leaders reach deal on tax plan

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House and Senate GOP leaders forged an agreement Wednesday on a sweeping overhaul of the nation's tax laws, paving the way for final votes next week to slash taxes for businesses and give many Americans modest tax cuts starting next year.

Top GOP aides said lawmakers had reached an agreement in principle on the final package. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk publicly about private negotiations.

Details still need to be drafted and assessed by congressional scorekeepers, but the final House-Senate compromise is on track to be unveiled this week, the aides said.

Asked if there is a deal in principle on the tax cuts, Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said, "It's more than that. I think we've got a pretty good deal."

The measure would give President Donald Trump his first major victory in Congress. It fulfills a longstanding goal by top Republicans such as Speaker Paul Ryan to rewrite the loophole-cluttered

tax code.

The measure has come under assault by Democrats who say it is unfairly tilted in favor of business and the wealthy.

Top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer said Wednesday GOP leaders should pump the brakes on taxes and delay a final vote until Sen.-elect Doug Jones, D-Ala., is sworn in.

Trump was making a pitch Wednesday for the tax plan, which is unpopular with many. He was to offer what aides called a "closing argument to the American people."

The speech comes as the White House has sought to push back against polling suggesting the public views the plan as heavily tilted toward corporations and wealthy Americans. Trump has asserted that the plan will lower tax rates for individuals and spur job growth, helping American families.

The total amount of tax breaks in the legislation cannot exceed \$1.5 trillion over the next decade, under budget rules adopted by the House and Senate. The legislation would add billions to the \$20 trillion deficit.

Gillibrand gets fight she wants after Trump's tweet

BY RICHARD LARDNER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand got a fight she wants after President Donald Trump lashed out at the New York Democrat in a provocative tweet that claimed she'd begged him for campaign contributions and would "do anything" for them.

Gillibrand, who's up for re-election next year and is considered a possible presidential contender in 2020, has been an outspoken voice in the national debate over how to confront sexual assault and harassment. She's argued that the rules in institutions from Congress to Hollywood to the U.S. military are set to benefit the powerful and the favored at the expense of the vulnerable.

Gillibrand and a chorus of Democrats declared Trump's tweet to be sexually suggestive, an assertion the White House flatly rejected. Appearing Wednesday on NBC's "Today" show, Gillibrand was asked whether she'd misread the meaning of Trump's tweet. "No," she responded.

She said the tweet was "a sexual smear intended to silence me."

The fiery exchange with Trump could brighten the spotlight on Gillibrand's campaign to upend the dynamics and put power in the hands of the victims while simultaneously pushing the 51-year-old mother of two boys to the forefront of an unformed Democratic presidential field.

The back-and-forth between Trump and Gillibrand on Tuesday came as a wave of sexual misconduct allegations roils Capitol Hill, forcing several lawmakers out of office in just the last week alone. Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., said he would resign amid an ethics probe into accusations that he sexually harassed several women. Reps. John Conyers, D-Mich., and Trent Franks, R-Ariz., also quit after misconduct accusations surfaced.

Gillibrand served notice several years ago that combating sexual assault would be her issue. A member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, she and other female lawmakers dressed down senior military leaders at a headline-making hearing, insisting sexual assault in the ranks has cost the services the trust and respect of the American people as well as the nation's men and women in uniform.



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., said President Donald Trump's latest tweet about her was a "sexist smear" aimed at silencing her voice.

"Not every single commander necessarily wants women in the force. Not every single commander believes what a sexual assault is. Not every single commander can distinguish between a slap on the ass and a rape because they merge all of these crimes together," Gillibrand told the uniformed men in 2013.

Four years later, Gillibrand added her voice to the growing number of male senators calling for Trump to resign in the face of multiple accusations of inappropriate sexual behavior. A day after her broadside, Trump singled her out.

The president tweeted: "Lightweight Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, a total flunky for Chuck Schumer and someone who would come to my office 'begging' for campaign contributions not so long ago (and would do anything for them), is now in the ring fighting against Trump. Very disloyal to Bill & Crooked-USED!"

Gillibrand was at a bipartisan Bible study in the office of Sen. Steve Daines, R-Mont., when she stepped out to take a call alerting her to Trump's tweet. She fired back, calling the president's tweet a "sexist smear" aimed at silencing her voice. She also renewed her call for a congressional inquiry into the accusations against Trump.

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NATION

Calif. wildfires still posing risk to communities

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — After announcing increased containment on one of the biggest wildfires in California history, officials warned that communities remain at risk and the threat could increase as unpredictable winds whip up again.

Red Flag warnings for fire danger due to Santa Ana winds and a critical lack of moisture were extended, with a possible increase in gusts into the end of the week.

Evacuations continued Wednesday for the seaside enclaves of Montecito, Summerland and Carpinteria and the inland agricultural town of Fillmore.

Officials announced Tuesday night that crews had carved containment lines around one-quarter of the blaze straddling Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

The so-called Thomas fire has

burned more than 900 structures, at least 700 of them homes, since it broke out Dec. 4.

It stretches across nearly 370 square miles of Southern California, making it the fifth-largest in state history.

Elsewhere, fire officials announced that a cooking fire at a homeless encampment sparked a blaze last week that destroyed six homes in the Bel Air neighborhood of Los Angeles.

Arson investigators determined that the so-called Skirball fire near the world-famous Getty museum was started by an illegal fire at a camp near a freeway underpass, city fire Capt. Erik Scott said.

The camp was empty when firefighters found it, but people apparently had been sleeping and cooking there for several days, he said.

Back at the largest of the



MIKE ELIASON, SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT/AP

Fire burns canyons and ridges above Bella Vista Drive near Romero Canyon as the fight to contain a wildfire continues in Montecito, Calif., on Tuesday.

wildfires, firefighters protected foothill homes while the flames churned mostly into unoccupied forest land, Santa Barbara County Fire Department spokesman Mike Eliason said.

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame member Eric Burdon and his

wife, Marianna, of Ojai, were among the people who fled the smoke Tuesday.

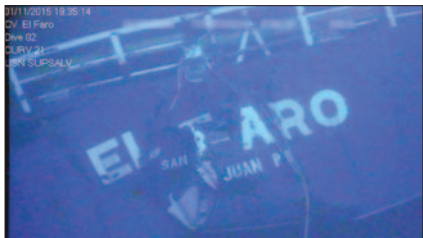
Burdon, a member of the 1960s British Invasion band The Animals, wrote on Facebook last week about having to flee and returning temporarily to find their

home still standing with ashes all around.

"A week like this gives you the perspective that life is what truly matters," he wrote.

A photo accompanying the post showed his handprint and signature written in ashes.

NTSB probe finds plenty of blame in '15 freighter sinking



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD/AP

This undated image made from a video released April 26, 2016, by the National Transportation Safety Board shows the stern of the sunken ship El Faro.

BY JASON DEAREN
Associated Press

While fateful decisions made by the captain of the doomed freighter El Faro were instrumental in the ship's sinking, federal investigators spread plenty of blame around and highlighted multiple safety issues in the maritime industry that contributed to its demise.

It was a confluence of factors that contributed to the sinking of the El Faro in the fury of Hurricane Joaquin on Oct. 1, 2015, which killed all 33 people on board, the National Transportation Safety Board announced. The report concluded a two-year investigation into the maritime disaster.

Among its findings, the NTSB cited Tuesday the El Faro captain's unwillingness to listen to his crew's suggestions to change course from the path of a raging hurricane, and a weak corporate safety culture that left crewmembers ill-prepared to deal with heavy weather. It also blamed an old ship with outdated lifeboats, open to the elements and a vessel inspection system that allowed older ships in poor condition to continue operating.

The board issued 53 safety recommendations, which investigators hope will be adopted by the industry, maritime safety inspectors and weather forecasters to make the seas safer for future generations.

The El Faro, which means "lighthouse" in Spanish, sank between Jacksonville, Fla., and San Juan, Puerto Rico, after losing engine power in the Category 3 storm. The NTSB retrieved the ship's voyage data recorder, or "black box," from the sea floor near the Bahamas, 15,000-feet under the surface. The device held 26 hours of data, including audio of conversations on the ship's bridge as the frantic crew struggled to save the ship and themselves.

Larry Brennan, a maritime law professor at Fordham Law School and retired U.S. Navy captain, said the NTSB's meeting highlighted major safety problems in the entire shipping industry.



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VETERANS

Cost among 'Forever' GI Bill impediments

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs will hire 200 temporary workers and shell out \$70 million to implement a major expansion of veterans' education benefits — a process beset by communication and information technology challenges, veterans advocates and VA officials said Tuesday.

Higher-than-anticipated costs are one of a number of problems that the agency has faced for months of a yearlong change to implement the "Forever" GI Bill, which contains 34 changes to veterans' education benefits and boosts spending by \$3 billion for 10 years.

VA officials, along with two organizations that advocated for the reformed GI Bill — Student Veterans of America and Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, or TAPS — went to Capitol Hill on Tuesday to update lawmakers on its implementation.

"It's our job to identify and solve problems and have a smooth, cost-effective implementation," said Rep. Jodey Arrington, R-Texas. "I do have concerns about the focus this is getting from VA senior leadership. I hope they understand it will be no small feat to execute a reform initiative of this

scale."

Advocates have called the Forever GI Bill the most sweeping expansion of veterans education benefits in a decade.

The bill, named the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act after the author of the original GI Bill of Rights, increases payments to vets with less than one year of active-duty service, restores benefits to veterans whose schools abruptly close, awards full GI Bill benefits to all Purple Heart recipients and increases aid for veterans pursuing science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, degrees, among other things.

It was dubbed the Forever GI Bill by supporters because it ends a 15-year limit on education benefits for veterans whose last discharge or release from active duty came on or after Jan. 1, 2013.

The bill was signed into law Aug. 16, and most of its provisions go into effect Aug. 1, 2018.

Of the 34 measures in the bill, 22 require "significant changes" to the VA's IT systems, said retired Maj. Gen. Robert Worley II, director of VA education services. The agency determined costs to program its IT systems to recognize the changes in benefits at about \$70 million — an amount more than double the \$30 million originally estimated for the task.

"We have major concerns on whether or not the office implementing this law is receiving adequate resources to execute this overhaul," said Will Hubbard, vice president of Student Veterans of America.

Worley said the VA was in the process of hiring 200 temporary employees who would process claims by hand until the IT system is improved. A 40- to 50-person team will be responsible for deciding which veterans would be eligible for increased aid for STEM degrees.

Student Veterans of America led the charge to expand veterans' education benefits and is watching closely as the VA carries it out, Hubbard said. Besides funding, the organization is worried about the VA's outreach to students.

The GI Bill expansion included a mandate to restore education benefits to veterans and military families affected by school closures, such as the shutdown of for-profit ITT Technical Institute in 2016. The VA has reached out to 8,000 people who might be eligible to have their benefits restored. So far, 250 have applied, according to Worley's testimony. A 27-person team — part of the VA's hiring efforts — will determine which veterans are eligible.

"We're concerned so few students have applied for restoration

of benefits," Hubbard said. "We encourage VA to partner with external organizations, like SVA, to reach out to widest audience possible."

But Worley said it's too early in the process to tell whether the outreach has worked. The VA sent the notifications Nov. 9.

"If we need more communication, we will do that," Worley said. "I don't know if it's realistic to expect 8,000 applications."

Portions of the Forever GI Bill went into effect this fall. TAPS, which is also involved in oversight of the bill's implementation, discovered delays in payments to GI Bill beneficiaries.

"Even with the few changes that went into effect, TAPS had issues with institutions of higher learning not paying parent from the student because of delayed VA payments," said Kathleen Moakler, director of TAPS. "Students receiving VA payments were not allowed to attend classes, register for spring 2018 or use campus facilities because the payment was delayed."

TAPS also told lawmakers that the VA inappropriately distributed letters to some veterans informing them they were no longer eligible for education benefits because they had hit the 15-year limit. Because of the new law, that limit no longer applies to

some veterans who received the letter just last year.

Worley said the VA would send more letters telling those veterans to disregard the notice.

"This is why people have no faith in government," said Rep. Kathleen Rice, D-N.Y. "You pass a historic piece of legislation, and the agency responsible for implementing it doesn't have the tools to implement it. It's so disappointing."

Lawmakers will continue to receive periodic updates from the VA about the implementation process.

Worley and other VA officials present Tuesday said they were confident the expansion would be fully in place before the 2018 school year.

In just under four months, VA has moved out quickly and is working hard on successfully implementing all of the provisions of the Colmery Act on time," Worley said. "There is a great deal of work remaining, but VA has taken significant steps since the law's signing."

A full breakdown of changes to the GI Bill is available on the VA website at benefits.va.gov, and veterans can follow updates on its implementation at the VA's Post-9/11 GI Bill Facebook page.

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VA: Dramatic impact on care if Choice effort not funded this month

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Veterans' health care will be dramatically affected if Congress finishes out the week without funding a program that permits many veterans to receive private-sector medical care, Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin warned Tuesday.

The Veterans Choice program will be depleted of funds within five weeks, Shulkin wrote in a notice to Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. "Without more money, the VA will soon stop referring patients to their private-sector doctors," he said.

Shulkin warned it could lead to diminished access to health care for veterans. The Choice program was established in 2014 to improve VA wait times and allow veterans to receive treatment closer to their homes. Since it was implemented, 1.9 million veterans have used the program at some point, and about one-third of VA medical appointments have been completed in the private sector, according to the VA.

"VA's other community care programs will have the capacity to handle all of the patients who will transition from the Choice program, and we wait time at appointments at VA facilities will

rise if large numbers of veterans return to VA to seek care," Shulkin wrote. "Taking these actions would have a number of negative consequences, including decreased access to care, damaged community partnerships and interrupted care continuity for veterans."

The VA was in the same position just four months ago. The Choice program nearly ran out of money in mid-August before Congress passed a bill providing \$2.1 billion in emergency funding to keep it going.

In the time since, lawmakers have negotiated legislation to reform Choice. Three bills now exist to provide temporary funding for Choice and create a new system for private-sector care, but lawmakers haven't come to an agreement on one of them.

In the past few months, Shulkin shared his own proposal for overhauling community care programs and has urged Congress to approve reform legislation before the end of the year. The House expected to recess Thursday, fol-

lowed by the Senate on Friday.

In response to the letter, Isakson issued a statement Tuesday asking Senate leadership to schedule a vote on the Caring for Our Veterans Act — a Choice reform bill his committee sent to the Senate floor Nov. 29. The legislation, totaling \$54 billion, would provide \$3 billion to the Choice program and phase it out after one year.

"It is critical that we pass this bipartisan legislation before the end of the year to ensure veterans continue to have access to efficient, timely and quality health care," Isakson said in the written statement. "I urge the Senate to

quickly pass this bipartisan legislation without delay."

In a statement last week, Shulkin pleaded with Congress to pass another emergency funding bill for Choice before the end of the year, and then come back in 2018 to discuss major reforms. With only days remaining before the holiday recess, that option was looking more likely Tuesday.

Shulkin wrote that the VA spends between \$200 million and \$400 million each month on appointments made through the Choice program. As of Dec. 7, there was \$490 million remaining, but much of that had already

been spent in December.

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NATION

Officials: Accused NY bomber followed radical preacher

By TOM HAYS
AND LARRY NEUMEISTER
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The man accused of carrying out a bomb attack in New York City's subway system was influenced by the sermons and writings of a radical Muslim preacher, Bangladeshi officials said Wednesday in the hours before the man was expected to have his first court appearance in the U.S.

Alkayed Ullah, a Bangladeshi immigrant living in Brooklyn, had asked his wife in Bangladesh to read the writings and listen to the sermons of Moulaana Jasimuddin Rahmani, the imprisoned leader of a banned group called Ansarullah Bangla Team, said Monirul Islam, a top official of Bangladesh's counterterrorism department.

The group has been linked to killings and attacks on secular academics and atheist bloggers in Bangladesh. Rahmani is serving time for his involvement in the killings.

The wife was questioned in Bangladesh and told investigators that her husband discussed Rahmani's writings with her during his last visit home, Islam said.

Ullah, 27, was expected to make his first court appearance Wednesday in New York, where he is in a hospital being treated for burns from a pipe bomb he strapped to his body and detonated in a pedestrian tunnel linking two busy subway stations.

Prosecutors in New York said that after his capture, Ullah told interrogators he was on a mission to punish the U.S. for attacking Islamic State.

"His motivation," Acting U.S. Attorney Joon Kim said, "was not a mystery."

Investigators found bomb-making materials in his apartment.

They said he carried out the attack after researching how to build a bomb a year ago and planned his mission for several weeks. The bomb was assembled in the past week using fragments of a metal pipe, a battery and a Christmas tree light bulb, along with the metal screws, authorities said.

The defendant "had apparently hoped to die in his own misguided rage, taking as many innocent people as he could with him, but through incredible good fortune, his bomb did not seriously injure anyone other than himself," Kim said.

He was charged with providing material support to a terrorist group, use of a weapon of mass destruction and three bomb-related counts. He could get up to life in prison.

Relatives and police said Ullah last visited his wife and newborn son in Bangladesh in September, after which he returned to the United States.

Counterterrorism officials questioned the wife and her parents before releasing her Tuesday night, Islam said, adding that investigators were questioning his brother-in-law and also planned to question any known close associates.

Ullah's wife, Jannatul Ferdous, told ABC News in a brief interview conducted through the closed door of her home in Dhaka, Bangladesh, that she had never heard her husband speak negatively of the U.S. She said when she spoke to him by phone the morning of the bombing, he gave no indication of what he planned to do.

With a tragedy averted and a growing certainty that he acted alone, attention turned to how best secure New York City's vast public transportation system and the daunting task of identifying those eager to do it harm.



STEVEN SENNE/AP

Visitors to the Boston Tea Party Museum throw replicas of historic tea containers into Boston Harbor on Monday from aboard a replica of the vessel *Beaver* in Boston. The museum is encouraging Americans to send unused tea leaves for Saturday's re-enactment of the historic act of defiance in 1773.

Museum asks Americans to send tea to drop into Boston Harbor

By PHILIP MARCELO
Associated Press

BOSTON — Americans are venting their frustrations with the current political climate by chucking tea into Boston Harbor. Sound familiar?

The Boston Tea Party Museum has been encouraging Americans to send them loose tea leaves to toss into Boston's waters this Saturday as part of its fifth annual re-enactment of the historic act of defiance that preceded the Revolutionary War.

The museum received more than 200 tea submissions as part of the new campaign.

Roughly 30 percent came from people who said they're dissatisfied with today's political climate, museum spokeswoman Stephanie Loeber said.

"I would love to have this tea dumped on the U.S. Congress," wrote Olivia, from Waltham in the Boston suburbs.

"I participate in this act of pro-

test to register my resistance to the anti-immigrant, anti-environment and anti-health care policies of Donald J. Trump," wrote Janet, of Reading.

Loeber stressed the re-enactment isn't meant to be political. The majority of letters the museum received were nonpolitical, from history buffs to those "just wanting to send in tea to participate."

Joanne, from Holliston, was among a number of participants who submitted tea in honor of her ancestors. She said her great, great, great grandfather participated in the original Tea Party.

Third-graders at Balch Elementary School in Norwood said they were excited to have their tea dumped in the harbor because they're currently learning about Colonial America and the events leading up to the Revolution.

"We are so grateful to live in Massachusetts where we can visit so many historical sites from this time period!" the class wrote.

The London-based East India

Co. even donated more than 200 pounds of expired tea for the occasion, Loeber said.

The Boston Tea Party Museum is located near where the actual Tea Party took place on Dec. 16, 1773. It features two replica ships where patrons get to toss fake cargo boxes of tea into the water.

Saturday's commemoration opens with actors recreating the fiery debate at Boston's Old South Meeting House over the unpopular Tea Act of 1773. A procession led by biff and drummers then marches from the historic meeting house to the nearby waterfront.

There, re-enactors will show how members of the Sons of Liberty — clad in Native American garb — boarded East India Co. ships moored at the harbor and dumped their valuable haul into the murky waters.

The protest prompted Britain to impose military rule and other sanctions on Massachusetts, galvanizing American opposition to Colonial rule.



JILL ZEMAN BLEEDER/AP

A Ten Commandments monument in Little Rock, Ark., is blocked off after a man crashed into it with a vehicle on June 28. A state commission has signed off on the final design for a new monument.

Ark. OKs new Ten Commandments monument

Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — An Arkansas commission cleared the way Tuesday for the installation of another Ten Commandments monument outside the state Capitol after a prior marker was shattered when a man crashed his car into the monolith less than 24 hours after it was put in place.

The Arkansas Capitol Arts and Grounds Commission signed off on the final design, which will include four concrete posts for the monument's protection.

Officials and supporters said there's no guarantee that such security measures will prevent the monument's destruction but they're confident with the final design.

"There's nothing you can do to make it perfect," said Republican state Rep. Bob Ballinger, who attended Tuesday's meeting as a representative of the American History & Heritage Foundation, the private group that's paying for the monument. "We think that considering cost, time and everything, we've done everything reasonable possible."

Chief Deputy Secretary of State Kelly Boyd said

the commission will review the security of all monuments on Capitol grounds, which also include ones honoring firefighters, veterans and the nine students who desegregated Little Rock's Central High School. The Little Rock Nine monument already includes concrete posts similar to the ones that will be placed with the Ten Commandments monument.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Arkansas said Tuesday that it plans to sue over the monument. "Erecting this monument is unnecessarily divisive and undermines our fundamental constitutional commitment to religious liberty for all Americans," said Holly Dickson, the organization's legal director. "Religious liberty means the government doesn't take sides on questions of faith."

The prior Ten Commandments monument was in place for less than 24 hours before it was destroyed by a man who was also accused of destroying Oklahoma's Ten Commandments monument in the same manner. The man, who livestreamed the incident on Facebook, was charged with criminal mischief in Arkansas but has been found mentally unfit for trial.

INDEPENDENT NEWS FOR THE U.S. MILITARY COMMUNITY

Whenever They Fight and Wherever They Live

The first Stars and Stripes was printed during the Civil War, when a band of Union soldiers published a handful of editions.

During World War I, Stars and Stripes reappeared in Paris on February 8, 1918, to serve the doughboys of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), by order of General of the Armies John J. Pershing. An all-military staff produced it weekly until the war's end.

A second renaissance began on April 18, 1942, when a small group of servicemen began publishing a four-page weekly Stars and Stripes in London. They sold each copy for "tuppence" (about 5 cents) and in no time doubled their page count to eight pages, printing daily instead of weekly.

The first World War II edition of Stars and Stripes featured an interview with Gen. George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff. Marshall quoted Gen. Pershing, World War I Commander of the AEF, who described Stripes as a major factor in sustaining morale. Stars and Stripes later found a champion and protector in Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander and later president of the United States.

Eisenhower enforced a hands-off policy in regard to Stars and Stripes that continues to the present day.

Operations expanded, following GIs to the battlefield to bring them the news. During the war, Stars and Stripes published over 30

separate editions, running up to 24 pages per issue.

At one time, Stars and Stripes had some 25 printing locations in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific. The Pacific edition was launched a week after VE day (Victory in Europe, May 8, 1945).

The war ended—but Stars and Stripes kept going. Its reporters and photographers continued to join American troops in the field, throughout the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, during the 1990s Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and in Bosnia and Kosovo.

From the 2003 outset of Operation Enduring Freedom, Stars and Stripes was there to report first-hand. The war in Afghanistan continues to receive steady coverage. And during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Stripes reporters embedded with military units in Kuwait and Iraq, as well as on Navy ships in the region.

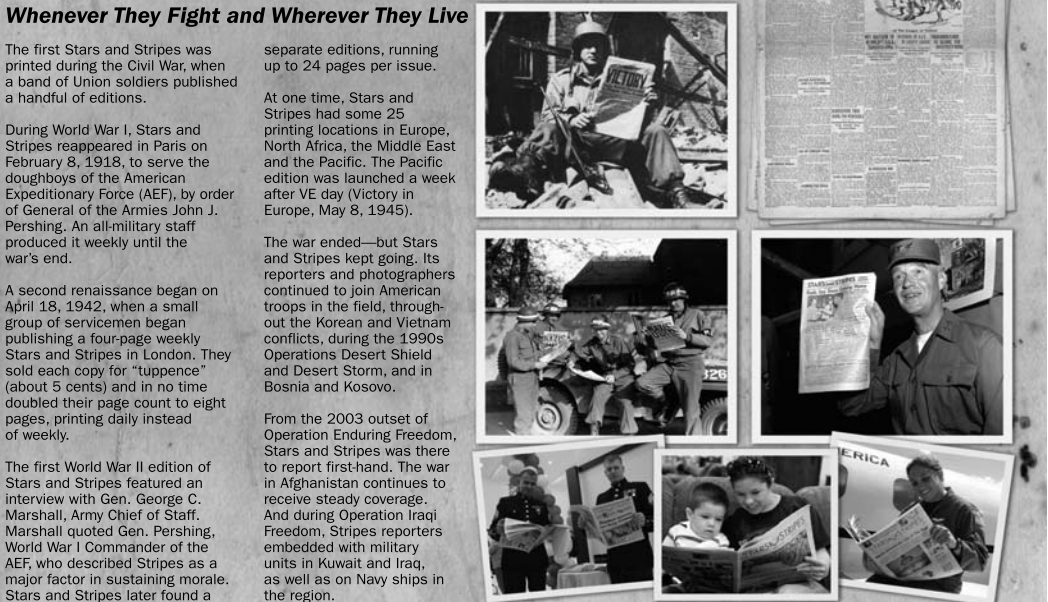
Stars and Stripes today is a multimedia news organization. The majority of Stars and Stripes unique reporting efforts is read now in digital form, either online at stripes.com or via mobile offerings for iPhone, Android and iPad, in over 200 countries around the world.

The print newspaper is still available for servicemembers, government civilians and their families in

Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific—and in contingency areas. Washington, D.C., hosts the Central office, where daily editions are transmitted to printers in Afghanistan, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Djibouti, as well as in Germany, Italy, UK, Japan, and South Korea. Stars and Stripes also publishes several weeklies (Stripes Guam, Japan, Korea and Okinawa), designed to serve the

needs of their respective military communities.

A U.S. edition comprised exclusively of Stars and Stripes reports from around the world now serves stateside forces and veterans. The U.S. edition is published in partnership with commercial newspaper publishers who serve communities with large military populations.



STARS AND STRIPES RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE

2015 Columbia Journalism School Dart Awards

Feature Story Reporting
(Daily Circulation 1,500,000)
Finalist: Martin Kuz: "Army Sgt. Isaac Sims left the war in Iraq, but it didn't leave him"

2014 Sigma Delta Chi Award – Feature Story Reporting

(Daily Circulation 1,500,000)
Recipient: Martin Kuz: "Death shapes life for teens that prepare bodies of fallen troops for final flight home"

2014 VFW News Media Award

For outstanding contribution to a better understanding of our American way of life and its institutions and interests by honest and forthright reporting.

2013 Military Reporters and Editors Awards

Notable Narrative Winner
Recipient: Laura Rauch

2013 Best American Newspaper Narrative Writing Contest

Notable Narrative Winner
Recipient: Martin Kuz: "Soldiers Recount Attack"

2013 National Headline Awards

Second Place: News Series
(Former After: A Warrior Wounded; A Family Challenged)

2011 Military Photographer of the Year

Honorable Mention
Recipient: Joshua DeMott

2011 Sigma Delta Chi Award

Breaking News Photography
(Newspaper Circulation 100,001+ or Affiliated Website/National Magazine) Recipient: Laura Rauch: "For those I love I will sacrifice"

2011 John Reagan "Tex" McCrary Award for Excellence in Journalism

Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation

2010 Military Reporters and Editors Awards

Awards – Overseas coverage
(< 100,000 circulation)
Recipient: Jon Rabirow

2010 National Headline Awards

First Place: Public Service (Forcing Change) – Third Place: News Series
(Coming Home: The Men of Triple Deuce)

2009 George Polk Awards in Journalism

George Polk Award for Military Reporting
Recipients: Charles Reed, Leo Shane III and Kevin Baron

2007 Military Reporters and Editors Awards

Awards – Overseas coverage (< 100,000 circulation)
Recipient: Monte Morin

2006 Military Reporters and Editors Awards

Awards – Overseas coverage (< 100,000 circulation)
Recipients: Monte Morin, Joe Giordano; Honorable mention: Nancy Montgomery Photography; Fred Zimmerman

2005 Military Reporters and Editors Awards

Awards – Overseas coverage (< 100,000 circulation)
Recipient: Steve Lewis Photography; Terry Boyd

2004 American Legion Excellence in Journalism Award

Ground Truth Award

2003 Scripps Howard Foundation National Journalism Award

First Amendment, Finalist

NATION

Crisis in foster care

Soaring use of opioids in US strains the system as kids are taken from their parents

By MATT SEDENSKY
AND MEGHAN HOYER
Associated Press

MARION, Ind. — She was first roused awake at 2:30 a.m. by a call seeking an emergency placement for a child. Ninety minutes later, it was a storm of texts telling of a problem at a foster home.

Then, after a fitful night and a morning spent furiously juggling 15 foster cases, Rachael Stark was splashed with coffee and running late for a meeting when her phone rang with yet another request. A child welfare worker was on the line telling of three siblings in need of a foster family. Without a pause, Stark offered a familiar line lapped with resignation.

"I've got no one," she said somberly.

Across the U.S., the soaring use of heroin and other opioids has sent tens of thousands of kids flooding into the foster care system, creating a generation of children abandoned by addicted parents, orphaned by fatal overdoses and torn from families by authorities fearful of leaving them in drug-addled chaos.

New foster care cases involving parents who are using drugs have hit the highest point in more than three decades of record-keeping, accounting for 92,000 children entering the system in 2016, according to just-released data by

the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The crisis is so severe — with a 32 percent spike in drug-related cases from 2012 to 2016 — it reversed a trend that had the foster care system shrinking in size over the preceding decade. All told, about 274,000 children entered foster care in the U.S. last year. A total of 437,000 children were in the system as of Sept. 30, 2016.

Among the states with the biggest one-year increases in their foster care population were Georgia, West Virginia and Indiana.

"This isn't a trickle. This isn't a wave. It's a tsunami," said Judge Marilyn Moores, who leads the juvenile court in Indianapolis and faces a crush of drug-related cases.

When Stephanie Shene started as a case manager at the state Department of Child Services in 2003, use of opioids was a virtual nonissue.

Now, it's a constant. She's increasingly vigilant looking for shaking, fidgety parents or needle marks on their arms, behind their ears and between their fingers.

Her agency has added more than 1,200 workers in four years, and its budget went from \$793 million to more than \$1 billion. Caseloads remain a challenge, though, and turnover is high.

Stark has spent the past 13 years as a case manager for The



PHOTOS BY DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

Shawnee Wilson holds her son, Kingston, in her apartment in Indianapolis in August. Despite some relapses, at that point she was clean several months and is convinced she'll be able to keep it up.

Villages, the largest private foster care and adoption agency in Indiana, which contracts with the state to find children homes. All but a few of her cases involve drugs, and of those that do, about half are opioid-related.

The Villages is receiving 30 to 40 percent more referrals than it had been accustomed to, creating a "crisis state," said President Sharon Pierce. The agency used to see about 60 percent of children return to their birth families. Today, it's about half of that.

'This isn't a trickle. This isn't a wave. It's a tsunami.'

Marilyn Moores

Indianapolis judge who leads the juvenile court

Successful foster parents sometimes adopt, but then that limits the family's ability to take on another foster child, creating the need for even more homes.

"So then we jump back on the treadmill," Pierce said.

Stark crisscrossed farm-lined stretches of Grant County on a day that was a series of home visits and a blur of calls and texts interrupted by sighs and talk of "imperfect solutions."

Her third stop was emblematic of the cases inundating the system.

Two sisters, 9 and 10, landed in foster care because their mother got hooked on painkillers. There was no family to turn to, with their grandmother also addicted.

Their mother's parental rights already have been rescinded, and foster parents Justin and Kristen Lovell hope to adopt.

"They had their choice," Justin Lovell said of the girls' parents, "and they didn't choose their children."

There is no simple assessment of the impact of all of this on kids. Some wind up in loving foster homes until their birth parents get clean.

At the other extreme are children whose parents' addictions have led to their own, or who hop

from foster family to foster family or live in a group home.

Anxiety can amass, academic performance can plunge, feelings of abandonment can run rampant and the ability to trust can be strained.

Said Maria Cancian, a social work professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison: "When people ask me, 'Is foster care good or bad?' the first thing I say is, 'Compared to what?'"

Shawnee Wilson has been on both sides of the system. She was 13 when she was removed from her home because of her parents' drug use.

Now 26, she's fighting to regain custody of a little boy born just over a year ago; it took a month for doctors to wean him off the heroin she exposed him to.

He's in foster care, and Wilson's been clean several months now, but she said it's hard to explain what compels someone to keep using even when it can cost them their children.

At times she's been high, "I can't see the consequences," she said, "because all I want is to feel that drug."



Judge Marilyn Moores works in her Indianapolis office in September. Moores presided over a court that took 1,270 children from their parents in 2016, more than triple a decade earlier.

WORLD



Expensive embassy

The new U.S. Embassy in London, which is being funded by the sale of existing property in London, is scheduled to open on Jan. 16. The completed project is expected to cost around \$1 billion.

Above: The embassy bar with a view overlooking the River Thames is shown during a press preview Wednesday.

Right: A general view of the exterior of the new U.S. Embassy building.

PHOTOS BY ALASTAIR GRANT/AP



Group works to boost African force created to fight jihadi threat

Associated Press

LA CELLE-SAINT-CLOUD, France — Presidents, princes and diplomats were meeting outside Paris on Wednesday to breathe life into a young African military force that aims to counter the growing jihadi threat in the Sahel region but needs a huge boost to fulfill its mission.

Nearly five years after France intervened to rout Islamic extremists in northern Mali, then controlled by an al-Qaida affiliate, the threat has spread to neighboring countries in the volatile region. It has also spawned new jihadi groups, including one that claims affiliation with Islamic State, recently defeated in Iraq and nearly pummeled in Syria.

French President Emmanuel Macron convened leaders of the five-nation force, known as G5 Sahel, and delegations representing Europe, the African Union and international organizations at a chateau west of Paris. German Chancellor Angela Merkel was among those attending, as well as envoys from Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.

Macron opened the conference with a closed-door meeting with the leaders of the Sahel nations.

The G5 Sahel force was launched in Bamako, Mali, on July 2 with Macron present. It aims to tackle the

jihadi menace, organized crime and human trafficking. Macron has taken the lead on persuading partners to help make the force viable because the fate of the Sahel region affects Europe.

Made up of soldiers from Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Chad, the fledgling force is to grow to a 5,000-strong army by March but is still in need of soldiers, training, operational autonomy and funding.

While funding is not the leading topic, Saudi Arabia was expected to announce a hefty contribution, an official in the French president's office said on condition of anonymity. A special funding conference is to be held in February. The budget to launch the force is \$293 million, with \$470 million needed down the road, French Defense Minister Florence Parly said on RFI radio.

In recent months, security forces and the U.N. peacekeeping mission have been prime jihadi targets in the Sahel. Four U.N. peacekeepers and a Malian soldier were killed in two attacks in Mali less than a month ago. In Niger, 13 soldiers died in October, weeks after four U.S. troops and four Nigerian soldiers were killed in a remote area of the country. Burkina Faso also saw an August attack that killed 18 at a restaurant in its capital, Ouagadougou.

Abbas: US unfit to broker peace deal

By ZEYNEP BILGINSOY
AND SARAH EL DEEB
Associated Press

ISTANBUL — Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas told Arab and Islamic leaders on Wednesday that the United States is no longer fit to broker an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal and should be replaced as mediator by the United Nations, outlining a significant policy shift in response to President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

In an impassioned speech, Abbas said his people will no longer accept the United States as a peace broker but added that they remain committed to international resolutions which have formed the basis of the process.

Abbas was speaking at the gathering of heads of state and top officials from Islamic nations at a summit in Turkey that is expected to forge a unified Muslim world's stance against Trump's decision.

Abbas said Trump's decision was a "crime" which came at a time when the Palestinians were engaged with Washington in a new push to reach what he said was anticipated to be the "deal of our times."

"Instead we got the slap of our times," Abbas said. "The United States has chosen to lose its qualification as a mediator... We will no longer accept that it has a role in the political process from now."

The speech marked a significant shift in Abbas' approach toward the United States after years of focusing on courting U.S. goodwill because of Washington's role as sole mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Immediately after Trump's announcement last week, Abbas had said the U.S. effectively disqualified itself as a broker, but Wednesday's speech was more

sharply worded and delivered to a global audience. It was also part of a speech that called on the gathering for specific steps to counter the U.S. decision on Jerusalem.

"We call that the (peace) process in its entirety be transferred to the United Nations," Abbas said. He also called on countries that believe in the two-state solutions to recognize Palestine as a state, and urged Arab and Muslim nations to financially support east Jerusalem.

In his more than hourlong speech, Abbas also urged Muslim nations and countries with relations with Israel to take necessary political and economic measures against Israel "to force it to abide by international consensus" to end its occupation of Palestinian territories, including east Jerusalem.

Last week, Abbas' aides said the Palestinian leader would not meet with Mike Pence during the U.S. vice president's planned visit to Israel and the West Bank next week. Abbas had initially planned to meet with Pence in the biblical West Bank town of Bethlehem, but two senior aides have said the meeting would not take place because of Trump's pivot on Jerusalem.

The Istanbul gathering of heads of state and top officials from the 57-member Organization of Islamic Cooperation was also an opportunity for the Muslim world to offer its strongest response yet to Washington's move.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan — the current president of the OIC — called on countries to urgently recognize the Palestinian state and Jerusalem as its capital.

Jerusalem's status is at the core of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Trump's Dec. 6 announcement was widely perceived as siding with Israel. Most countries around the world have not recognized Israel's 1967 annexation of east Jerusalem.

European Parliament defeats plans to ban kebab ingredient

Associated Press

BRUSSELS — The European Parliament on Wednesday narrowly defeated plans to ban an additive that is considered key in industrial meats for the popular doner kebab.

Needing an absolute majority of at least 376 votes for a ban on phosphates, the legislature fell 37 votes short. The vote was 373-272 with 30 abstentions.

The decision has been hotly awaited by the doner kebab industry, which says it needs the phosphates to keep the frozen meat juicy, tender and tasty for consumption. Others argued that the phosphates were a health risk for cardiovascular diseases.

"We saved your kebabs. You're welcome," said the Christian Democrat EPP group, which argued

for keeping the phosphates in since it claims there is no proof of negative health effects.

The Socialists and Greens led the arguments for the ban on health grounds.

"This is a sad day for consumer rights, which have been trampled on," said Greens EU legislator Bart Staes.

The vote had been portrayed by some as a battle to save the kebab from EU encroachment. Still, even if phosphates had been banned, the industry would have been forced only to look for alternatives, not forced to stop producing a fast food that is as popular in some European cities as the hamburger is in the United States.

A study by the European Food Safety Agency next year could reignite the whole debate.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Man's cheeseburgers stolen in armed robbery

CT **HAMDEN** — Connecticut police are looking for the suspect in the theft of a bag of cheeseburgers.

Hamden police Capt. Ronald Smith said the 23-year-old victim was walking on the street carrying the bag of cheeseburgers Saturday night.

The New Haven Register reported he was held up by an armed man, who fled on foot with the cheeseburgers.

Masked men invade hotel, steal an ATM

TX **HOUSTON** — Houston police are looking for seven to 10 men who invaded a luxury hotel in the city's Galleria area and walked out with the hotel's ATM.

Authorities said the men, all wearing masks, stormed into a Marriott hotel about 2:30 a.m. Tuesday, threatened an unarmed security guard and a cleaning person and headed for the money machine in the hotel lobby.

Police said the robbery was particularly easy because the ATM wasn't bolted down, so the men tipped it and carried it out the front door. They dumped the machine in the back of one of their three cars and drove away.

No customers were in the lobby at the time of the heist.

Public asked to return cash stolen in robbery

CA **RIVERSIDE** — Law enforcement officials are asking anyone who picked up money thrown onto Interstate 15 after a Lake Elsinore bank robbery to return the evidence.

According to Riverside County sheriff's investigators, a man threw the money onto the freeway Saturday as he was being pursued by Riverside County sheriff's deputies.

The Press-Enterprise reported Sunday that witnesses saw motorists driving on the freeway stop to pick up the money and drive away. A statement from the sheriff's office did not specify whether the evidence was only cash or if there were other items.

The man has been arrested on suspicion of robbery, felony evading and parole violations.

Man who escaped from prison in 1997 arrested

PA **ERIE** — An inmate who disappeared 20 years ago from a federal prison in Pennsylvania is set to be returned to the state for arraignment on an escape charge.

The Erie Times-News reported that Ghassan Saleh, 66, was arrested last month after flying into New York from Lebanon, his native country. Deputy U.S. Marshal Chad Sensor said Saleh was aware that he was wanted when he decided to return to the country.

Saleh was working on a grounds crew when he escaped from the federal prison near Bradford in 1997. He had been serving a sen-

THE CENSUS

\$16M

The approximate amount awarded to the family of a Connecticut man who fell to his death from a fourth-floor window after a fight while playing beer pong. The Connecticut Post reported Monday that a jury ruled in favor of the family of Salomon Martinez, a married father from Stratford. Authorities said Martinez went to a Naugatuck apartment in January 2013 to play the drinking game. Police said a fight erupted after two men lost a \$10 bet and accused

Martinez of cheating. Martinez locked himself in a child's bedroom. He was later found dead on the cement sidewalk. The other two men pleaded guilty to manslaughter.



ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP

Reflections at Nubble Light

In this long-exposure shot, holiday lights reflect in the waters off Nubble Light, silhouetting photographer Michael Blanchette, of Bedford, N.H., on Monday in York, Maine. The beacon on top of the lighthouse has been helping mariners navigate the coastal waters of southern Maine since 1879.

tence of almost six years after being convicted of cocaine trafficking in Michigan.

Saleh is scheduled to be arraigned in federal court in Erie on Tuesday.

Jailed ex-officer tries to contact his teen victim

NC **LOWELL** — Authorities said a former police officer serving prison time for impregnating a then-14-year-old girl in North Carolina has violated the restrictions set by his plea agreement by attempting to contact her.

The Gaston Gazette reported James "Paul" Blair, 52, was sentenced to 12 years in prison after pleading guilty to statutory rape of a child in March. The victim's mother, Karen Vaughn, said Blair sent a letter to a family member to forward to the teen.

Vaughn said her daughter has been sickened by these attempts and hospitalized.

Department of Public Safety officials confirmed the infrac-

tion. Gaston County District Attorney Locke Bell said it's up to corrections officials to determine discipline.

The maximum term on the range of the former Lowell officer's plea agreement was nearly 20 years.

Ex-deputy gets 2 years for sex with inmate

MS **PASCAGOULA** — A former sheriff's deputy in Mississippi will serve two years in prison for having sex with an inmate while on duty.

The Sun Herald reported that Johnathan Jenkins, 33, was sentenced Friday on one count of unlawful sexual activity.

In his plea, Jackson admitted to having sex with a female inmate for two days in September 2016 while on duty as a Jackson County deputy.

Man acquitted of plotting ex's murder

NH **NEWPORT** — A New Hampshire man charged in a failed murder-for-hire plot involving his ex-wife has been acquitted.

The Valley News reported jurors on Tuesday found Maurice Temple, 64, not guilty of criminal solicitation of murder, conspiracy to commit murder and attempt to commit murder.

Temple and his mother, Pauline Chase, 83, were arrested in July after the supposed hit man, Mark Horne, went to police and agreed to secretly record phone and video conversations. Chase was found not competent to stand trial.

Prosecutors say Temple owed his ex-wife, Jean Temple, money after their divorce and was in favor of arranging to have her killed.

Temple's lawyer claims her client was set up by Horne and Jean Temple.

Snowplow used to capture theft suspect

MI **LAWTON** — A store owner said he used a snowplow to help capture a man who allegedly stole lottery tickets from his southwestern Michigan store.

Carl Trumbula told WWMT-TV the masked man walked into Country Lakes General Store in Van Buren County on Monday with a scratch-off ticket, claiming it was a winner. Trumbula said he turned his back to scan the ticket, and the man fled on foot with other tickets.

Trumbula said he chased the man using a truck and yelled at him to stop before slowing down and knocking him over with the truck's plow. He said the man got up and kept running, so Trumbula tackled him.

The sheriff's department said the suspect, who had a machete in his pants, had possible broken bones and will face charges.

From wire reports

FACES



'I was way off'

'Last Jedi' star surprised by direction of General Hux

By RICK BENTLEY
Tribune News Service

Irish actor Domhnall Gleeson thought he had a pretty good idea about what the future would hold for his character of General Hux after playing him in "Star Wars: The Force Awakens." He got a big shock when he saw the script for "Star Wars: The Last Jedi."

"I had my own ideas of what would happen to him, but not based on anything anyone told me," Gleeson says. He laughs and adds, "I was way off with what I thought would happen to him in this film."

What that future holds will remain a mystery until "The Last Jedi" opens on Friday. Just like all of his fellow cast members, Gleeson has been told not to reveal any information about the film. So instead of looking to what will be, Gleeson gladly chats about what has been especially exciting about playing General Hux.

The biggest plus was that Gleeson has not really played a character like this before. He describes General Hux as being deeply uncomfortable, very insecure, a bully and the worst person "to be in a room with if you had a knife."

"I have always wanted Hux to be a character that kids hate as soon as they see him. And, I think that has happened."

The place where all of the nastiness plays out the most is in his relationship with fellow dark side bad guy Kylo Ren (Adam Driver). Ren, who fans found out in the first movie

is the son of Han Solo (Harrison Ford) and General Leia (Carrie Fisher), is the guy you call when a dirty job needs to be done. Despite being on the same evil side, Hux and Ren are very competitive. That element will be a part of the new movie.

What they share, says Gleeson, is a lust for power.

"Power is the name of the game," Gleeson adds. "Not having power and then getting power, you get desperate for it. And that desperation is very fun to play."

Before becoming part of the Star Wars universe, Gleeson, 34, starred in a variety of TV shows and films, including having small roles in both parts of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" playing Bill Weasley. He laughs and says he only had a couple of lines, but it was enough to give him insight into what it means to be part of a huge film franchise that's surrounded in secrecy.

He saw one huge difference between the two. "With 'Harry Potter,' there were books so people largely knew what was going to happen," Gleeson says. "This is different because the fervor not only of the anticipation of seeing the film but in finding out what happens is at a much higher level."

Gleeson's theory on why Star Wars has become such a massive part of pop culture is that it was a perfect storm of creative elements. He says it started with the genius of George Lucas, who envisioned the world, coupled with the perfect casting of characters.

Domhnall Gleeson is General Hux in "Star Wars: The Last Jedi."

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Rock Hall 2018 class includes Nina Simone, Bon Jovi, the Moody Blues

From wire reports

Iconic singer Nina Simone and New Jersey rockers Bon Jovi lead the 2018 class of Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees, which includes four first-time nominees.

The Cars, as well as first-time contenders Dire Straits, The Moody Blues and Sister Rosetta Tharpe, also are part of the 2018 class announced Wednesday. They will be inducted on April 14, in Cleveland, Ohio.

The six inductees were chosen from a group of 19 nominees.

Tharpe, a pioneering guitarist who performed gospel music and was known to some as the godmother of rock 'n' roll, will be inducted with the Award for Early Influence. She died in 1973.

The other five acts will be inducted as performers. The jazzy and soulful Simone, also a first-time nominee, was a leader in pushing for civil rights and influenced the likes of Alicia Keys and Aretha Franklin before her death in 2003. The Cars, founded in Boston in 1976, combined New Wave and classic rock sounds. This year marked the band's third nomination. Bon Jovi, first nominated in 2011 and again this year, have sold more than 120 million albums and launched No. 1 hits.

Rock Hall voters have recently opened their hearts to progressive rockers, which benefited "Nights in White Satin" singers The Moody Blues.

Jada Pinkett Smith slams snub

Jada Pinkett Smith is not taking the omission of her film and its breakout star (Tiffany Haddish) from Monday's Golden Globe nominations lightly. The "Girls Trip" star took to Twitter on Tuesday to voice her discontent, alleging that the Hollywood Foreign Press Association did not even watch the film.

"I'm not upset about @TiffanyHaddish or @GirlsTripMovie not getting a [nomination]. I'm discouraged about the fact that the Hollywood Foreign Press / @goldenglobes wouldn't even WATCH the movie," she wrote.

"Girls Trip" stars Pinkett Smith, Haddish, Queen Latifah and Regina Hall as a group of friends reconnecting, after years apart, on a trip to New Orleans' annual Essence Music Festival. The film, which pulled in \$115 million at the box office, received positive reviews while Haddish's performance was likened to that of Melissa McCarthy in "Bridesmaids."

According to a source with the HFPA, an official screening was held July 18.

Universal, the studio releasing the picture, confirmed that there was a screening for the HFPA. It also said that invitations were sent to the group for the film's premiere and that members received screenings. But a news conference for the group was forgone as HFPA members did not

travel to New Orleans, where the film was junketing — which Pinkett Smith also alluded to in her tweets.

Other news

■ "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" has landed a leading four Screen Actors Guild Awards nominations, including best ensemble. The other nominees for best ensemble at the 24th annual SAG Awards are: "Lady Bird," "Get Out," "Mudbound" and "The Big Sick." Nominated for best actress are: Judi Dench, Sally Hawkins, Frances McDormand, Margot Robbie and Saoirse Ronan. The best actor nominees are: Timothee Chalamet, James Franco, Daniel Kaluuya, Gary Oldman and Denzel Washington. Winners will be announced Jan. 21.

■ A band of misfits known as the Goonies, a sinking ship, some baseball ghosts and an unrelenting New York cop are being added to the prestigious National Film Registry. The Library of Congress announced Wednesday that the films "The Goonies," "Titanic," "Field of Dreams" and "Die Hard" are among the 25 movies tapped for preservation this year. This year's slate includes the 1987 musical biopic "La Bamba," "Superman" from 1978, the 2000 thriller, "Memento" and 1941's animated "Dumbo."

■ The African American Film Critics

Association has dubbed Jordan Peele's thriller "Get Out" the best movie of the year. The film also won honors for directing, acting — for lead Daniel Kaluuya — and screenplay. Other films receiving awards or landing on the group's top 10 films list of the year were "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" for lead actress Frances McDormand, "Last Play Plying" for supporting actor Laurence Fishburne and "Girls Trip" for supporting actress Tiffany Haddish and best comedy honors.

■ Travel Channel host Jack Maxwell says he's undergoing treatment for cancer. The personality behind the "Booze Traveler" series tweeted Tuesday: "I have cancer. 3 little words, one big sentence." The 54-year-old Boston native says he's being treated in Arizona for non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

■ The Primetime Emmy Awards will move to Monday night to avoid a huge potential tackle by "Sunday Night Football." NBC and the Television Academy said Tuesday that the three-hour telecast will air Sept. 17.

■ Los Angeles detectives said Tuesday they are investigating a woman's claim that Oscar-winning director Roman Polanski molested her in 1975, when she was 10 years old. Although the statute of limitations has long expired, law enforcement officials may be able to use any evidence they collect to help prosecute other cases.

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Value Village sues Washington AG over demands

By GENE JOHNSON
Associated Press

SEATTLE — The company that operates 300 Value Village. Savers and other thrift stores in the U.S., Canada and Australia is suing Washington state Attorney General Bob Ferguson, saying his office has violated the company's rights by demanding \$3.2 million to settle a three-year investigation.

TVI Inc. of Bellevue said in the lawsuit filed in federal court Monday that it's trying to head off an anticipated complaint from the attorney general's office.

The for-profit company, which is represented by the Seattle law firm of Davis Wright Tre-

maine, said Ferguson's demand for payment does not appear to be connected to any alleged legal violations.

TVI also said the attorney general's office insisted that it disclose to customers how much of the sale price of items in its stores goes to charities, something the company said would violate its free speech rights and is precluded by Supreme Court precedent.

Brianna Aho, a spokeswoman at the attorney general's office, noted the company paid \$1.8 million to six Minnesota charities and agreed to overhaul its donation and disclosure practices in a 2015 settlement with that state's attorney general.

"Value Village's lawsuit is riddled with omissions and inaccuracies. There's a reason they agreed to pay \$1.8 million as a result of the Minnesota Attorney General's investigation," Ferguson said in a statement Tuesday evening. "No target is ever happy to be investigated by our office. However, my office will continue vigorously protecting consumers from deception."

In its complaint, the company said the attorney general's office launched its investigation three years ago. TVI answered all of the investigators' questions, provided 15,000 pages of documents, and sought to meet with them to address any concerns, the company

said.

Ferguson's office refused to meet with the company for a year and a half, the complaint said. When the sides did confer in summer 2016, the attorney general's office issued a set of demands — the vast majority of which the company said it already complied with. TVI refused demands that it post signs telling people who donate goods what it pays the charities for those goods and what bulk rates it pays charities for donations.

The attorney general also sought a \$5.1 million penalty, which the company declined to pay. After that, the lawsuit said, TVI heard nothing for 11 months — until a meeting last August, when the at-

torney general's office "reduced its monetary demand to \$3.2 million, but admitted this amount was 'subjected' to any actual, specific alleged violations of law."

Again, the company refused to pay, and further attempts to negotiate failed.

Sara Gaugl, a TVI spokeswoman, said in an emailed statement the company is confident the issue will be resolved soon.

"While those conversations are ongoing, we remain fully compliant with all relevant Washington state laws," she said.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Dec. 14)	\$1.2042
Dollar buys (Dec. 14)	69.8304
British pound (Dec. 14)	\$1.37
Japanese yen (Dec. 14)	111.00
South Korean won (Dec. 14)	1,065.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound	\$1.3373
Canada (Dollar)	1.2861
China (Yuan)	6.6194
Denmark (Krone)	6.3341
Egypt (Pound)	17.8838
Euro	\$1.1752/8509
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8658
Hungary (Forint)	267.24
Israel (Shekel)	3.5405
Philippines (Peso)	50.48
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3022
Norway (Krone)	8.3746
Poland (Zloty)	3.7598
Saudi (Riyal)	3.59
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3513
South Korea (Won)	1,089.51
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9901
Thailand (Baht)	32.54
Turkey (New Lira)	1.2497

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance. For Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, for nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

MARKET WATCH

Dec. 12, 2017

Dow Jones Industrials	118.77
	24,504.80
Nasdaq composite	-12.76
	6,862.32
Standard & Poor's 500	4.12
	2,664.11
Russell 2000	-3.72
	1,516.12

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	3.25
Discount rate	0.75
Federal reserve market rate	0.08
3-month bill	1.29
30-year bond	2.78

Early Facebook friends now its sharpest critics

By BARBARA ORTUTAY
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Some of Facebook's former friends are starting to express some serious doubts about the social network they helped create.

Facebook exploits a "vulnerability in human psychology" to addict its users, Sean Parker, the company's first president, said in a public forum last month. Chamath Palihapitiya, a former Facebook vice president who joined the company in 2007, recently told an audience at Stanford that the company is "ripping apart the social fabric of how society works."

And Roger McNamee, a venture capitalist and early investor in both Facebook and Google, wrote that both companies "threaten public health and democracy" in an August USA Today op-ed.

It has been a rough year for the

tech industry, especially social media companies. It opened with concerns about fake news and "filter bubbles" that can shield people from contrary beliefs, segued into pressure on Facebook and Twitter to clamp down on trolling and online harassment, and culminated with congressional hearings into Russian agents' alleged use of their platforms to meddle with the 2016 presidential election.

All of that, of course, came against a steady drumbeat of tweets from President Donald Trump, who used the service to praise his allies and castigate his foes, often in inflammatory fashion.

But the unkindest cut of all may have come from three people who helped build Facebook in its early days. In early November, Parker told the news site Axios that Facebook was built to answer the

question, "How do we consume as much of your time and conscious attention as possible?" He called its stream of comments, "likes" and reactions a "social validation feedback loop that exploits how human brains work."

A few days later, McNamee wrote another essay for the Guardian in which he argued that Facebook and Google have used "persuasive techniques developed by propagandists and the gambling industry," combining them with modern technology to maximize their profits while pushing "appeals to fear and anger" and other material that reinforces filter bubbles and addictive behavior.

Palihapitiya piled on, too, saying at a Stanford Graduate School of Business talk last month that he feels "tremendous guilt" about helping create tools that have widened social divisions.

WEATHER OUTLOOK



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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OPINION

Anti-Mueller effort politically motivated

By DOYLE MCMAUS
Los Angeles Times

Some of President Donald Trump's biggest fans have declared war against special counsel Robert Mueller — and given Trump's television-watching habits, he's surely listening.

"Mueller is corrupt. The senior FBI is corrupt. The system is corrupt," former House Speaker Newt Gingrich said on Fox News last week.

"A disgrace to the American justice system," Fox News host Sean Hannity, a Trump favorite, declared. "The head of the snake." Mueller has put the country "on the brink of becoming a banana republic," he charged.

"Mueller poses an existential threat to Trump presidency," warned Christopher Ruddy, a longtime Trump friend who runs the conservative Newsmax website.

Even The Wall Street Journal published an editorial calling on the special counsel to quit. "Mueller is too conflicted to investigate the FBI and should step down in favor of someone more credible," the newspaper argued.

Other conservatives, including members of Congress, have joined a chorus of complaints about the special counsel, the FBI and the Justice Department — even though all three are led by Trump appointees.

All it looks and sounds like a concerted campaign to delegitimize Mueller's investigation, launched in May to look into evidence that Russia tampered with the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Trump's most fervent supporters disliked the idea from the start, but anti-Mueller fury stepped up markedly after the prosecutor indicted former national security adviser Michael Flynn this month. Flynn's cooperation could enable Mueller to charge Trump with obstruction of justice, although there's no sign that the prosecutor plans to take that step.

The anti-Mueller campaign isn't just noisy; it's dangerous. Gingrich, Hannity

The anti-Mueller campaign isn't just noisy; it's dangerous. And despite the high volume, the case against Mueller is thin.

and Ruddy are people Trump listens to. Fox News is the channel he watches. Whether or not they persuade the president that he ought to fire Mueller, they are clearly paving the way — by convincing Trump's political base, the Fox News-watching public, that dismissing the prosecutor would be justified.

A CBS News Poll this month found that Americans overall are evenly divided over whether Mueller's investigation is fair or politically motivated. But there was a stark partisan split: 81 percent of Republicans said the probe is politically motivated, while only 23 percent of Democrats agreed. That suggests that if Trump fired Mueller, he would get nearly automatic support from his party's voters.

Despite the high volume, the case against Mueller is thin.

One major talking point is that although the special counsel is a Republican, many of the lawyers he has hired are Democrats. Six of Mueller's top 15 aides donated money to Hillary Clinton's campaign, according to Politifact, at least one gave to Republicans.

Critics have also complained that some of the FBI agents working on the investigation also worked on the 2016 investigation of Clinton's emails, which they consider a whitewash. Among them, one agent has attracted particular attention: Peter Strzok, who was moved off the team by Mueller after he sent a derisive text message about Trump. GOP members of Congress are particularly angry that they didn't learn about the incident until months later.

And they have charged that Mueller

aide Andrew Weissmann, a career Justice Department official, is biased. The Wall Street Journal reported Friday that Weissmann attended Clinton's election night party in November.

So yes, the investigation — like every other part of the federal bureaucracy — includes Democrats. There's no cure for that. Federal regulations prohibit the Justice Department from considering career appointees' political affiliation.

That didn't stop House Republicans from criticizing FBI Director Christopher Wray, another Trump appointee, when he appeared before them last week.

"If you kicked everybody off of Mueller's team who was anti-Trump, I don't think there'd be anyone left," griped Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio.

"I am emphasizing in every audience I can inside the bureau that our decisions need to be made based on nothing other than the facts and the law," Wray replied. "I'm not aware of any senior FBI executives who are allowing improper political considerations to affect their work."

Trump's lawyers say he's never even considered firing the special counsel. But experts who worked on earlier investigations, both Republicans and Democrats, told me that Trump is essentially free to fire Mueller and, in effect, shut down the inquest — if he's willing to take some political heat.

That doesn't mean Mueller's evidence will disappear. It will remain in the hands of the Justice Department. At that point, Congress can summon Mueller to disclose what he learned. Congress can also press for a new special counsel — or begin impeachment proceedings.

But Republican voters, primed by the delegitimization campaign, will press GOP senators and representatives to support Trump, not Mueller. Judging from the lawmakers' performance so far, there's little reason to expect that many would defy both their president and their most loyal voters.

Doyle McMaus is a Los Angeles Times columnist.

Honor American Indians' military heroism

By ARTHUR I. CYR
Special to Stars and Stripes

The United States government rightly honors the contributions of Native Americans to defense and protection of our nation. In late November, a White House ceremony recognized the special contributions of the "code talkers," members of the Navajo Tribe employed in communications in the Pacific theater of World War II.

Appropriately, the ceremony took place shortly before the Dec. 7 anniversary of the attack on the U.S. Navy base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, by the military forces of Imperial Japan. Native Americans, along with members of other ethnic and racial minorities, played a crucial role in our ultimate total military victory in that total war.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt rightly — and shrewdly — emphasized national unity as vital in the struggle. Today, his strategic as well as political war leadership is recognized and generally praised.

In early December, the White House removed 2 million acres of land in Utah designated for federal protection. The Bears Ears monument will lose 1.1 million acres, 85 percent of the total area, and the Grand Staircase-Escalante monument will lose 800,000 acres, 45 percent of the total. President Barack Obama designated Bears Ears shortly before leaving the White House.

Five American Indian tribes are participating in a lawsuit opposing these drastic changes: the Hopi, the Navajo, the Pueblo, the Ute Indian and the Ute Mountain. The lands have cultural and religious significance for the tribes.

President Donald Trump marred the code talker ceremony with a crude ethnic reference to Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., as "Pocahontas," and emphasized economic development as well as tourism opportunities in freeing the lands from federal supervision.

The media have overwhelmingly focused on these dimensions, but the underlying story is the profound, often-overlooked contributions of American Indians to military history, including but not limited to the military. At the time of the Pearl Harbor attack, 5,000 Native Americans were in uniform.

By the end of World War II, more than 44,500 American Indians served in the U.S. armed forces. That is more than 10 percent of their population. Many distinguished themselves in combat, as in earlier and later wars.

During the Vietnam War, Navy Boatswain's Mate 1st Class James Elliott Williams, a Cherokee, commanded Navy PBR (Patrol Boat, Riverine) 105 in the Mekong Delta. On Oct. 31, 1966, his own patrol boat and a partner boat came under heavy fire from virtually all directions. He directed maneuver and fire of the boats, and effec-

tively killed in support from Navy Seawolves attack helicopters. U.S. forces destroyed more than 50 junks and sampans, and killed approximately 1,000 of the enemy.

Also in Vietnam, Army Staff Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez, a Yaqui, served with Detachment B56, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces. On May 2, 1968, a helicopter inserted a Special Forces team in dense jungle west of Loc Ninh, Vietnam, an area with substantial enemy activity, and resulting combat killed or wounded all team members.

Benavidez volunteered to go to the area with a rescue helicopter. Despite repeated serious wounds, he carried or dragged wounded men to the extraction zone. He rallied comrades and formed a defensive perimeter after another incoming helicopter crashed. Only when all other Americans still alive were safe did he agree to withdraw.

These Medal of Honor recipients are only two examples of many Native Americans who have rallied to our nation, starting with the American Revolution.

Honor the code talkers and other heroes, who honor us all, and avoid distraction from pettinors.

Arthur I. Cyr is Clausen Distinguished Professor at Carthage College and author of "After the Cold War."

OPINION

Even after Ala., Bannon's sticking with plan

By MARC A. THIESSEN

Special to The Washington Post

Steve Bannon and his alt-right movement have helped accomplish something no one in a quarter-century has been able to do: get a Democrat elected in the state of Alabama.

Alabama is one of the most reliably Republican states in the country. The last time a Democrat was elected was in 1992, and no Democrat has won more than 40 percent of the vote in a Senate race there since 1996. The closest election in recent memory was in 2002, when Jeff Sessions won re-election by a margin of 19 points. Sen. Richard Shelby has won his last three elections by 35 points, 30 points and 28 points, respectively. So it takes a special kind of stupid to pick a candidate who can lose to a Democrat in Alabama.

Not just any Democrat, but an uncompromising pro-abortion rights Democrat. Alabama is one of the most anti-abortion states in the union. According to the Pew Research Center, 58 percent of Alabama voters believe that abortion should be illegal in all or most cases, while only 37 percent disagree.

And yet the Democrats won with a pro-abortion extremist on the ballot. How extreme? In September, "Meet the Press" host Chuck Todd asked Jones what limitations he would support on abortion. He could not name one. "I am a firm believer that a woman should have the freedom to choose what happens to her own body," he said, "and I'm going to stand up for that and I'm going to make sure that that continues to happen." When pressed if he would support a ban on late-term abortions after 20 weeks, Jones said, "I'm not in favor of anything that is going to infringe on a woman's right and her freedom to choose," adding that he supports the right to life "once a

baby is born. ... That's where I become a right-to-lifer."

Yet despite these radical views, Jones won in anti-abortion Alabama. Why? Because Bannon and his allies forced Alabamians to choose between a pro-abortion rights Democrat and an alleged sex predator. Bannon helped nominate a man who was credibly accused of pursuing and sexually molesting teenage girls — and then stood by him when his loathsome alleged conduct was exposed. Bannon counted on distrust of the mainstream media and conservative voters' repulsion at the Democrats' pro-abortion rights views to put his man over the top. It didn't work. Because while the state's evangelical Christian majority is appalled by abortion, they are also appalled by grown men who prey on high school girls.

Now Bannon wants to replicate his disastrous Alabama strategy in Republican primaries across the country. He has announced that he is seeking Moore-like challengers to take on every GOP incumbent except Sen. Ted Cruz, of Texas. Bannon is busy taking the GOP back to the glory days of 2010, when Republicans nominated such terrible Senate candidates that they lost very winnable senate races in places such as Delaware and Nevada — losing the chance to retake control of the Senate. The difference is, back then, the stakes were not so high. Barack Obama was president, and unless Republicans could win 60 votes, a few more GOP Senate seats would have made little difference.

But today, a few GOP Senate seats can make all the difference, because Republicans control the House, the Senate and the White House. President Donald Trump was already struggling to get his agenda passed with a narrow 52-seat GOP Senate majority. Thanks to Bannon, that majority



BRYAN ANDERSON/AP

Former Trump White House strategist Steve Bannon speaks in support of U.S. Senate candidate Roy Moore during a rally Monday in Midland City, Ala. Moore lost Tuesday.

has been whittled down to 51. That makes it harder for Trump to advance any of his remaining agenda next year and complicates his ability to confirm judges and get other nominees through the Senate.

Jones' victory also put the Democrats within striking distance of taking back control of the Senate in 2018. If that happens, the Trump presidency is over. The "resistance" will control Congress, and Trump's ability to pass conservative legislation and continue appointing conservative judges — especially another Supreme Court justice — will be gone. Moreover, Democrats will run the Russia investigation and Chuck

Schumer, D-N.Y., as majority leader, will have unbridled subpoena power. Trump could face impeachment proceedings.

That is the future if Trump does not learn the lesson of Alabama and tell Bannon to back off. The goal in 2018 should be to expand Trump's governing majority, not lose it. Instead of targeting vulnerable Democrats and strengthening the Trump presidency, Bannon is busy destroying the Trump presidency. Trump may want to suggest he stop.

Marc A. Thiessen writes a weekly column for The Washington Post on foreign and domestic policy and contributes to the PostPartisan blog. He is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

Dems' possibilities grow with miraculous victory

By JENNIFER RUBIN

The Washington Post

In one of the most remarkable upsets since, well, the presidential race last year, Democrat Doug Jones narrowly defeated Republican Roy Moore, who had been dogged by credible allegations of child sexual predation and openly declared his nostalgia for slavery, his bigotry toward Muslims and his wish to see homosexuality criminalized.

Despite Moore's obvious, flagrant flaws, Jones' win stands as an impressive — even miraculous — victory in a state Donald Trump won by 28 points last year. Defying both right-wing pleas to preserve a Senate seat and the president's personal endorsement of Moore (capped off by a rally Friday just over the border in Florida), Alabama voters decided they'd prefer not to perpetuate the stereotype of reactionary, racist Southerners.

Kudos to those who ran a disciplined race, referencing but not exploiting Moore's alleged victims and positing an affirmative message for his state that included health care and education. Credit should also go to Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., whose last-minute declaration he had not voted for Moore may have swung some voters. In addition, an exceptionally high black turnout (30 percent of the electorate in early exit polls), as well as overwhelming support among younger voters and a 17-point gender gap — very similar to the coalition that delivered big wins for Democrats in Virginia — made the difference.



JOHN BAZEMORE/AP

Democrat Doug Jones speaks Tuesday in Birmingham, Ala. He won a Senate election in a state Republican President Donald Trump won by 28 points last year.

Certainly, the ultimate responsibility and credit for the defeat of the odious Moore goes to Alabama voters who decided enough was enough.

The consequences of the election will be played out through the midterm elections and possibly beyond. We should keep our eye on five possible results of Jones' victory.

First, Trump, having been rebuffed twice by Alabama voters (after backing Luther Strange, who lost in the Republican primary, and then Moore), emerges as a weakened, somewhat pathetic character.

In a state he won with over 60 percent of the vote last year, his approval in exit polling was 48 percent, with disapproval at 47 percent. His party rebounded him on "Obamacare" repeal and now failed to carry his candidate over the finish line. In Alabama, of all places, With political impotence may come a Trumpian outburst — or string of outbursts — and a greater willingness among Republicans in the House and Senate to defy him. It's every man and woman for him- or herself in 2018.

Second, the defeat of Moore will intensify focus on Trump and his accusers as well as miscreants in Congress. With the resignations of Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., and Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., the tide had clearly turned in favor of credible accusers. Given the swift and fierce reaction in response to Trump's demeaning tweet virtually calling Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., a prostitute, watch for emboldened Democrats to demand an investigation of Trump's alleged sexual misconduct. That may well be a key issue in 2018. The president may now have more to fear from female senators than from Robert Mueller.

Third, the GOP is spared the ordeal of seating Moore in the Senate, but at the price of narrowing their margin to 51-to-49. This makes passage of the tax bill that much dicier and puts Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, already under fire for support of the first version, in a precarious position. Does she swallow the phony spin and the bogus analyses or stand firm in support of the Obamacare exchanges and fiscal

prudence? (FamiliesUSA put out another analysis debunking her claim that two legislative fixes make up for repeal of the individual mandate.) Expect the onslaught against Collins to intensify.

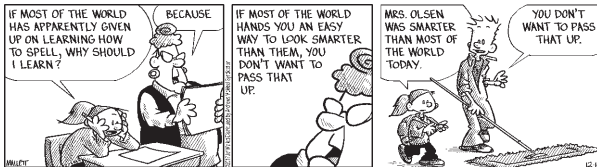
Fourth, this may be the beginning of the end of Steve Bannon's self-perpetuated myth that he's a brilliant strategist. He managed to lose a Senate seat in Alabama. As a result, his efforts to primary mainstream GOP incumbents may fall flat and suffer from a shortage of funding. The GOP establishment lives to fight another day.

Fifth, we pray the defeat of Moore initiates some soul-searching in the GOP, a determination to hold to moral and intellectual standards and to reject, if not Trump, then Trumpism. If pure, undistilled Trumpism is a dud in a deep-red state, perhaps Republicans will conclude it is a failed political philosophy for the country at large. We hope Democrats take this as a sign that solid candidates voicing mainstream views can rally their base and also attract disgusted Republicans. Plainly, there are a lot of voters up for grabs, no longer tied to the GOP.

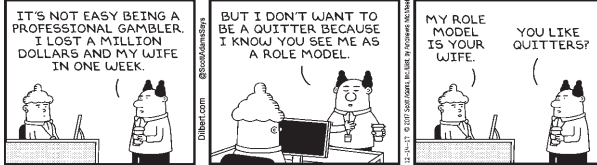
In sum, the country and the GOP should breathe a sigh of relief, while Democrats are entitled to a victory lap. The party gets a final lift going into 2018, when majority control of the House and Senate is not out of the realm of possibility. A political debacle has been avoided, and we're all the better for it.

Jennifer Rubin is a Washington Post columnist.

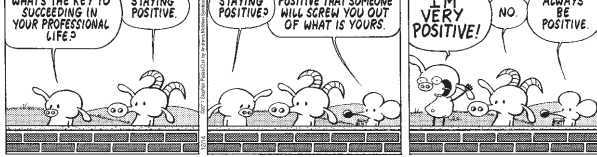
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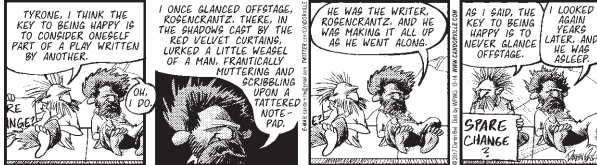
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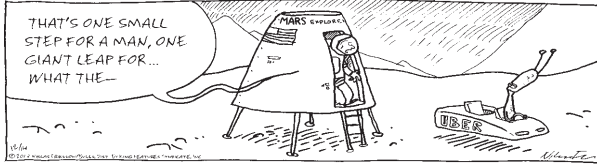
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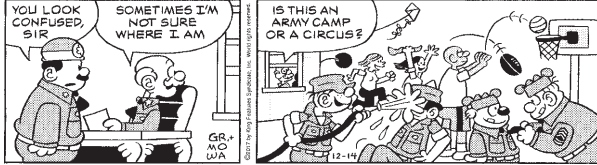
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15				16					17			
			18				19		20			
21	22			23		24						
25				26		27		28		29	30	31
32			33		34		35		36			
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46	47	48				49		50				
51					52		53			54	55	
56					57				58			
59					60				61			

ACROSS

- Sharp turn
- Ointment amounts
- Pal
- Altar promise
- Vicinity
- Protagonist
- 2014 Ben Affleck film
- Persia, today
- Pooch
- Hybrid fruit
- Tea biscuits
- Quarterback
- Marino
- MSN alternative
- Ewe's mate
- [Yawn]
- Carpet type
- Spy org.
- Roman emperor
- Firetruck necessities
- Joan of —
- Links grp.
- URL ending
- Baby cat
- Invective
- Actor Stephen
- to differ!
- Seasoning herb
- Spanish ayes
- Ball attire
- Sugar suffix
- "The Thin Man" dog

DOWN

- Sharp turn
- Fuss
- Venetian vessels
- Sharp weapon
- "Entourage" role
- Ernie's "Sesame Street" pal
- Leaves for lunch?
- Ballerina's hairstyle
- Roll call reply
- Russian river
- Stereo alternative
- A billion years
- "Unh-unh"
- Obi
- Silver salmon
- Pouch
- Ms. Farrow
- Seven-sided figure
- Desire
- Complain
- Alabama neighbor
- Biblical boat
- Lanka lead-in
- High, wispy cloud
- "The Dapper Don"
- Earl Grey, for one
- Travel permit
- Nile wader
- Try out
- Praise
- Numbered rd.
- Buckeyes' sch.
- Profit

Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	I	R	T	R	I	M	J	U	D	O
E	D	U	I	O	T	A	I	G	O	R
A	L	T	T	E	A	L	I	G	H	T
N	E	H	U	R	U		E	R	G	
			E	L	B	A	S	E	V	E
T	E	A	C	A	R	T	S	R	I	T
W	A	G	R	U	S	E	S	E	T	A
I	C	E	D		T	E	A	T	O	W
T	H	E	R	E		A	M	O	R	
			A	Y	E		R	O	W	D
T	E	A	K	E	T	T	L	E	I	R
R	A	R	E		C	H	O	U	F	N
U	R	I	S		H	E	L	P	E	M

12-14

CRYPTOQUIP

G S H B J R Q U N B R Z C Q R X W
J F J N D G C G H F Z W D R V W
S H N S Q H Q J U J V L J V R V F
R X N C V F Z H X Q J V L H X D R V -
N Q N L W .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A LOUD SHOUT IS MADE BY SOMEONE DURING BOISTEROUS FESTIVITY, I GUESS THAT'S A REVEL YELL.


Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals S

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Remaining free agents

NEW YORK — The 158 remaining free agents are categorized as qualifying for the **AMERICAN LEAGUE**.

BALTIMORE (A) — Pedro Alvarez; dh-1b; Ryan Flaherty; 2b; Chris Young; 3b; J. Hardy; ss; Jeremy Hellickson; rhp; Ubaldo Jimenez; rhp; Wade Miley; rhp; Seth Smith; of; Chris Tillman; rhp.

BOSTON (A) — Fernando Abad; rhp; Blaine Boyer; rhp; Rajai Davis; of; Mitch Moreland; lf; Eduardo Nunez; if; Addison Reed; rhp; Chris Young; of.

CHICAGO (2) — Mike Pelfrey; rhp; Geovany Soto; of.

CLEVELAND (2) — Craig Breslow; rhp; Jay Bruce; Austin Jackson; of; Boone Logan; of; Carlos Santana; c; Bryan Shaw; rhp; Josh Smith; of.

DETROIT (1) — Anibal Sanchez; rhp.

HOUSTON (5) — Carlos Beltran; of; Francisco Lirio; rhp; Justin Verlander; rhp; Francisco Lirio; of; Cameron Maybin; of.

KANSAS CITY (3) — Mike Cabrera; of; Trevor Cahill; rhp; g-Renzo Castillo; of; Mike Moustakas; 3b; Peter Moynihan; rhp; Jason Varvaro; of.

LOS ANGELES (10) — Andrew Bailey; rhp; Clayton Kershaw; rhp; Yulies Escobar; 3b; Ricky Nolasco; rhp; Bud Norris; rhp; Clayton Kershaw; of; Eric Hosmer; 3b; Ben Reiter; of; Fernando Salas; rhp; Huston Street; rhp.

MILWAUKEE (2) — Matt Belisle; rhp; Bartolo Colon; rhp; Dillon Gee; rhp; Glen Perkins; rhp; CC Sabathia; rhp.

NEW YORK (3) — Todd Frazier; 3b; Jaime Garcia; rhp; CC Sabathia; rhp; Michael Pineda; rhp.

OAKLAND (2) — Yonder Alonso; lf; Gordon Beckham; if; Jarrod Dymon; of; Salvador Perez; 3b; Ryan Sweeney; of; ny Valencia; 1b-3b.

TAMPA BAY (3) — Peter Bourjos; of; Lucas Duda; lf; Tommy Hunter; rhp; Logan Morrison; lf; Trevor Plouffe; rhp; Chris Rasmus; of; Sergio Romo; rhp.

TORONTO (5) — Andrew Cashner; rhp; Carlos Gomez; of; Miguel Gonzalez; rhp; Jason Heyward; lf; Mike Napoli; lf.

ORLANDO (5) — Brett Anderson; rhp; Darwin Barney; 2b; Jose Bautista; of; Miguel Montero; lf; Michael Saunders; of.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

ARIZONA (6) — Gregor Blanco; of; Jorge De La Rosa; dh; David Hernandez; lf; Martin Geronzi; rhp; Fernando Rodney; rhp; Adam Rosales; if; Ryan Theriot; lf.

ATLANTA (2) — R.A. Dickie; rhp; Jason Motte; rhp.

CHICAGO (2) — G-Jake Arrieta; rhp; Alex Avila; c; q-Wade Davis; rhp; Brian Kintzler; rhp; Jon Lester; rhp; Ryan Sweeney; lf; Rene Rivera; c; Josh Uehara; rhp.

CINCINNATI (4) — Brandon Arroyo; rhp; Zack Cozart; 3b; Scott Feldman; rhp; Drew Storen; rhp.

COLORADO (3) — Alexi Amarista; if; Carlos Gonzalez; of; Ryan Hanigan; c; q-Wade Davis; rhp; Scott Feldman; rhp; Jake McGee; if; Pat Neshek; rhp; Mark Reynolds; lf.

LOS ANGELES (7) — Yu Darvish; rhp; Andre Ethier; of; Curtis Granderson; of; Ryan Lugo; lf; Brandon Moseley; rhp; Chase Utley; 2b; Tony Watson; rhp.

PHILADELPHIA (4) — Matt Barnes; rhp; Pedroia; 2b; Jose Lobaton; c; G-Jake Arrieta; rhp; Ichiro Suzuki; of.

MILWAUKEE (3) — Matt Garza; rhp; Anthony Swarzak; rhp; Neil Walker; 2b.

NEW YORK (1) — Jose Reyes; lf.

PHILADELPHIA (4) — Andres Blanco; if; Ryan Howard; 1b; Hyun-Soo Kim; of; Daniel Nava; lf.

PITTSBURGH (3) — Joaquin Benoit; rhp; Justin Smoak; 1b; Edwin Jackson; rhp.

ST. LOUIS (4) — Zach Duke; rhp; q-Lance Lynn; rhp; Brandon Lynn; rhp; Seung-Hwan Oh; rhp; Rick Aybar; ss; Jhoulys Chacin; rhp; Jordan Lyles; rhp; Adam Lind; rhp.

WASHINGTON (12) — Matt Albers; rhp; Ryan Blanton; rhp; Alejandro de la Cruz; 3b; Stephen Strasberg; rhp; Ryan Zimmerman; rhp; Howie Kendrick; of; Brandon Kintzler; rhp; Ryan Lugo; lf; Jose Lobaton; c; G-Jake Arrieta; rhp; Ichiro Suzuki; of.

WASH. STATE (1) — Owners meetings, Beverly Hills, Calif.

Jan. 12-14 — Winter meetings, Lake Buena Vista, Fla.

Jan. 12-14 — Salary arbitration hearings exchanged.

Jan. 24 — BWWA Hall of Fame voting announced.

Jan. 29-Feb. 16 — Salary arbitration hearings exchanged.

Jan. 30-31 — Owners meetings, Beverly Hills, Calif.

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College football

Bowl schedule

Saturday, Dec. 16

Celebration Bowl

at Atlanta

NC A&T (11-0) vs. Grambling State (11-1)

New Orleans Bowl

North Texas (9-4) vs. Troy (10-2)

Cure Bowl

Georgia State (6-5) vs. Western Kentucky (6-5)

Las Vegas Bowl

Boise State (10-3) vs. Oregon (7-5)

New Mexico Bowl

Albuquerque

Colorado State (7-5) vs. Marshall (7-5)

Camella Bowl

Montgomery, Ala.

Arkansas State (7-3) vs. Middle Tennessee (6-6)

Tuesday, Dec. 19

Boat Race (Fla.) Bowl

at Akron

Florida (10-3) vs. FAU (10-3)

Wednesday, Dec. 20

Frisco (Texas) Bowl

Louisiana Tech (6-6) vs. SMU (7-5)

Thursday, Dec. 21

Gasparilla Bowl

at St. Petersburg, Fla.

Temple (6-6) vs. FIU (8-6)

Friday, Dec. 22

Bahamas Bowl

Ohio (6-6) vs. UAB (6-6)

Famous Idaho Potato Bowl

at Boise, Idaho

Central Michigan (7-5) vs. Wyoming (7-5)

Saturday, Dec. 23

Birmingham (Ala.) Bowl

South Dakota (9-2) vs. Texas Tech (6-6)

Fort Worth Bowl

South Dakota State (10-2) vs. Army (9-3)

Dollar General Bowl

at Mobile, Ala.

Appalachian State (8-4) vs. Toledo (11-2)

Sunday, Dec. 24

Hawaii Bowl

Fresno State (10-3) vs. Houston (7-4)

Tuesday, Dec. 26

Hawaiian Bowl

West Virginia (7-5) vs. Utah (6-6)

Quick Lane Bowl

at Detroit

Northern Illinois (8-4) vs. Duke (6-6)

Phoenix

Kansas State (15-0) vs. UCLA (6-6)

Wednesday, Dec. 27

Independence Bowl

at Fort Worth, Texas

Southern Mississippi (8-4) vs. Florida State (10-3)

Pinstre Bowl

Bronx, N.Y.

Boston College (7-5) vs. Iowa (7-5)

San Jose State Bowl

at San Jose, Calif.

San Jose State (7-5) vs. Purdue (6-6)

Thursday, Dec. 28

Houston Bowl

Texas (6-6) vs. Mississippi State (7-5)

Friday, Dec. 29

Annapolis Bowl

at Annapolis, Md.

Virginia (6-6) vs. Navy (6-6)

Camping World Bowl

at Orlando, Fla.

Oklahoma State (9-3) vs. Virginia Tech (9-3)

Alamo Bowl

at San Antonio

Stanford (10-3) vs. Michigan State (9-3)

Holiday Bowl

at San Diego

Washington State (9-3) vs. Michigan State (9-3)

Friday, Dec. 29

Bell Bowl

at Chino, Calif.

Wake Forest (7-5) vs. Texas A&M (7-5)

Sun Bowl

at El Paso, Texas

NC State (8-4) vs. Arizona State (7-5)

Muscle City Bowl

at Nashville, Tenn.

Kentucky (10-3) vs. Northwestern (9-3)

Arizona Bowl

at Tucson, Ariz.

New Mexico State (5-5) vs. Utah State (6-6)

Midwest Bowl

at Chicago, Ill.

Clemson (12-1) vs. Georgia Tech (12-1)

College Football Championship

at Miami, Fla.

Alabama (15-0) vs. Clemson (12-1)

College Football Championship

at Miami, Fla.

Alabama (15-0) vs. Clemson (12-1)

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College Football Championship

at Miami, Fla.

Alabama (15-0) vs. Clemson (12-1)

Jackson 1-5, Smith 0-1, Bullock 0-1, Bradley 0-1, Johnson 0-1, T.Harris 0-4). Rebounds—Denver 44 (Plumlee 13), Detroit 40 (Drummond 10). Assists—Denver 27 (Barton 10), Detroit 17 (Smith 5). Total Fouls—Denver 5, Detroit 16. A—15,480 (21,000).

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

COLLEGE BASKETBALL/MLB



JOHN MINICILLO/AP

Cincinnati's Jacob Evans, left, shoots against Mississippi State's Quindary Weatherspoon during the second half Tuesday in Highland Heights, Ohio. Cincinnati won 65-50.

College basketball roundup

No. 25 Bearcats hand Bulldogs first loss

Associated Press

HIGHLAND HEIGHTS, Ky. — No. 25 Cincinnati has plummeted to the fringe of the rankings and needed a confidence boost. The Bearcats got it against a previously unbeaten team.

Jacob Evans III had 24 points and eight rebounds as Cincinnati recovered from its back-to-back losses and handed Mississippi State its first defeat, 65-50 on Tuesday night.

The Bearcats (8-2) were coming off losses to crosstown rival Xavier and Florida that dropped them from No. 11. They ended the slump with a solid defensive showing against the Southeastern Conference's last unbeaten team, blocking 11 shots.

"We needed to get this win for us to build our confidence and get this thing back on track," Evans said.

Mississippi State (8-1) was off to its best start since 2003-04. The Bulldogs struggled to make shots in their first game against a ranked team. They missed 10 straight in the first half and 14 in a row in the second as Cincinnati blew open a close game.

"We lost the game tonight because of our inability to attack that zone," coach Ben Howland

said. "We were standing way too much, not enough ball movement, not enough cutting and getting the ball inside."

No. 15 Seton Hall 84, Saint Peter's 61: Angel Delgado had 18 points and 11 rebounds, his 57th career double-double, leading the Pirates in a rare game at their old campus location: Walsh Gym.

Desi Rodriguez scored 17 points and Khadeen Carrington added 11, as Seton Hall (9-1) raced out to an early lead and never looked back, winning for the 20th time in the last 21 meetings against the Peacocks (4-5).

Davaunite Turner scored 13 points and Nick Griffin had nine to pace Saint Peter's.

The Pirates displayed a stifling defense in the early stages of the game to take control, forcing the Peacocks to misfire on 11 of their first 12 field-goal attempts.

Army 76, St. Francis 64: Alex King pumped in a season-high 24 points and the visiting Black Knights rebounded from a 29-point drubbing by Wake Forest.

King scored 13 of his points in the first half, sparking Army to a 14-point halftime advantage, 44-30.

Army (6-4) shot 50 percent from the field (29-for-58).

Machado drawing interest

O's young star could move to new position — or team

By BEN WALKER
Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Florida — Baltimore Orioles star Manny Machado could be on the move. To a new position — or a new team.

Big names emerged in trade talk Tuesday, with Machado, New York Mets pitcher Matt Harvey and Detroit pitcher Michael Fulmer heating up the winter meetings.

And no surprise, the busy New York Yankees are looming, looking to boost a ballclub getting more formidable by the day.

For the moment, no deals for that trio of All-Stars.

"Everything else is — today — moot," Mets general manager Sandy Alderson said of a Harvey deal.

Pitching is always at a premium, and the Chicago Cubs completed two-year contracts for reliever Brandon Morrow and pitcher Drew Smyly, expected to miss next season while recovering from Tommy John surgery.

Morrow's deal includes a 2020 club option that could become guaranteed depending on his performance. Smyly's contract is worth \$10 million.

The Yankees made another trade, too. Nothing close to the magnitude of getting NL MVP Giancarlo Stanton from Miami, but nonetheless a deal that could help them very soon. New York sent third baseman Chase Headley, pitcher Bryan Mitchell and \$500,000 to San Diego for outfielder Jabari Blash.

"The biggest motivation from our end is it creates a lot more financial flexibility," Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said after dumping a \$13 million salary.

That could lead to another starter for the Yankees' rotation, such as Fulmer. The 2016 AL Rookie of the Year was an All-Star last season, going 10-12 with a 3.83 ERA for the Tigers.

A more intriguing possibility, for any club, is Machado.

At 25, he's already a three-time All-Star and two-time Gold Glove



KENNETH K. LAW, BALTIMORE SUN/TNS

Manny Machado has mentioned he'd like to shift to shortstop, whether he stays with the Orioles or they trade him.

er at third base. Plus, he's a power bat, hitting 33 home runs with 95 RBIs last season.

Machado had an \$11.5 million salary last season, is eligible for arbitration and can become a free agent after next year's World Series. That's prompted questions about whether the last-place Orioles can afford him, or if he'd even want to stick around Camden Yards.

Or if they'd be better off trading him to guarantee something in return.

In the meantime, Machado is indicating he'd like to shift over to shortstop. The spot is open, now that J.J. Hardy has become a free agent.

Machado made his big league debut as a third baseman in 2012 with the Orioles and has made 49 starts at shortstop, most of them in 2016 when Hardy was hurt.

Baltimore manager Buck Showalter said Machado has long expressed an interest in playing shortstop.

"Always has, since the day he

signed," he said. "To say that Manny and I haven't had conversations about it over the years, I wouldn't be truthful."

"Obviously, we're not there yet, but it's something that Manny — I found that players need to know about that, not February 15th or March 15th. They need to know about it back then — Manny's capable of playing both real well," Showalter said.

Then again, Machado could be playing either spot for some other team. The Yankees would love to slot him in, but no telling whether the Orioles would trade him to an AL East rival.

Baltimore owner Peter Angelos didn't get along great with former Yankees owner George Steinbrenner, their animosity ratcheted up after the teams got into a vicious brawl in 1998.

"I've got a real gut feeling about how it's going to work out, but I want to make sure we cover all the bases before whatever direction we go in," Showalter said.

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NHL

Roundup

Vasilevsky helps Bolts blank Blues

Tampa wins matchup of top 2 teams

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Nikita Kucherov and Brayden Point scored, Andrei Vasilevsky stopped 32 shots and the Tampa Bay Lightning beat the St. Louis Blues 3-0 on Tuesday night in a matchup of the NHL's top two teams.

Tyler Johnson added an empty-netter as Tampa Bay (22-6-2) earned its fifth straight win. It was Vasilevsky's third shutout this season and the seventh of his career.

Jake Allen made 22 saves for St. Louis, which had won four in a row. The Blues (21-9-2) were shut out for the third time at home this season.

Devils 5, Kings 1: Taylor Hall scored twice and host New Jersey ended Los Angeles' eight-game winning streak.

Travis Zajac, Brian Boyle and Brian Gibbons also scored for the Devils, who snapped a two-game skid. Cory Schneider made 16 saves.

Capitals 5, Avalanche 2: John Carlson scored a tiebreaking goal in the second period and host Washington defeated Colorado for its eighth win in 10 games.

Brent Connolly, Matt Niskanen and Devante Smith-Pelly added third-period goals for the Capitals, and Braden Holtby made 22 saves. Jakub Vrana scored early, and Evgeny Kuznetsov had three assists.

Blackhawks 3, Panthers 2 (OT): Patrick Kane scored 2:24 into overtime and host Chicago topped Florida for its third straight win.

Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews tied it at 2 with 6:02 left in the third period after a terrific pass from Brandon Saad. Toews and Saad each had a goal and an assist. Chicago rookie Alex DeBrincat added two assists.

Oilers 7, Blue Jackets 2: Connor McDavid had a goal and

three assists, and Laurent Brossier stopped 28 shots as visiting Edmonton routed Columbus.

Mark Letestu, Matt Benning and Jesse Puljujarvi each had a goal and an assist for the Oilers, who chased Vezina Trophy-winning goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky at the end of the second period.

Hurricanes 3, Golden Knights 2 (SO): Cam Ward earned his 300th career win when Phillip Di Giuseppe's goal in the fifth round of a shootout lifted visiting Carolina over Vegas.

Marcus Kruger and Trevor van Riemsdyk scored for the Hurricanes in regulation. Ward, who made 22 saves, became the 32nd goalie in NHL history to reach 300 wins.

Sabres 3, Senators 2: Evander Kane, Kyle Okposo and Benoit Pouliot scored in the second period to lead host Buffalo past sinking Ottawa.

Rasmus Ristolainen had two assists as the Sabres extended their season-best point streak to four games at 2-0-2. Robin Lehner made 24 saves against his former team.

Flyers 4, Maple Leafs 2: Sean Couturier scored the tiebreaking goal with 2:55 left and host Philadelphia beat Toronto for its fourth straight victory.

Couturier and Claude Giroux each had a goal and an assist, and Travis Konecny also scored as the Flyers blanked a six-game home losing streak. Scott Laughton added an empty-netter, and Brian Elliott made 20 saves.

Wild 2, Flames 1 (SO): Mikael Granlund scored the winning goal in a shootout and host Minnesota edged Calgary.

The shootout reached the fifth round before Granlund beat Mike Smith. Alex Stalock stopped Michael Ferland to give Minnesota its third straight victory, the first two coming in overtime.

Shots on Goal—Calgary 10-10-4-3-27. **Minnesota** 4-10-7-1-22. **Power-play opportunities—Calgary** 0 of 3; **Minnesota** 4 of 7. **Goals—Calgary** Smith 13-9-3 (22 shots-21 saves), Minnesota, Dubnyk 12-2 (10-10), Stalock 6-3 (17-16). **A-18,767 (18,064).** T-2:36.

Oilers 7, Blue Jackets 2

Edmonton 1 4 2 2-7. **Columbus** 0 0 0 0-2-2. **First Period—1,** Edmonton, Kassian 3 (Slepyshev, Letestu), 5:55. **Second Period—2,** Edmonton, Nugent-Hopkins 12 (Cammalleri, Benning), 6:27 (pp.). **Edmonton,** Benning 4 (Brossier, McDavid), 16:41. **4,** Edmonton, Lucic 5 (McDavid, Draaisma), 19:09 (pp.). **5,** Edmonton, Letestu 7, 19:59 (sh.).

Third Period—6, Columbus, Bjorkstrand 6 (Harrison, Nutivaar), 6:28. **7,** Columbus, Johnson 2 (Bjorkstrand, Calvert), 8:59. **8,** Edmonton, Puljujarvi 5 (McDavid, Nurse), 13:44. **9,** Edmonton, McDavid 12 (Puljujarvi), 17:46.

Shots on Goal—Edmonton 8-18-12-38. **Columbus** 9-15-30. **Power-play opportunities—Edmonton** 2 of 4; **Columbus** 0 of 2. **Goals—Edmonton,** Brossier 3 (6-1) (30 shots-29 saves), Columbus, Bobrovsky 16-8-1 (26-21), Korpisalo 3-2-1 (3-1). **A-14,767 (18,500).** T-2:26.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division									
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA		
Tampa Bay	30	22	6	2	46	113	74		
Toronto	32	20	11	1	41	108	92		
Boston	37	14	9	4	32	78	85		
Montreal	31	13	14	4	30	85	99		
Florida	31	12	14	5	29	92	108		
Detroit	30	11	13	6	28	81	99		
Ottawa	29	9	13	7	25	79	101		
Buffalo	31	8	17	6	27	104			

Metropolitan Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Columbus	31	19	11	1	39	88	80
Washington	32	19	12	1	39	100	93
New Jersey	30	17	13	0	38	94	84
N.Y. Islanders	30	17	10	3	37	108	100
N.Y. Rangers	30	16	11	3	35	99	89
Pittsburgh	32	13	13	6	31	84	94
Carolina	30	12	11	7	31	83	93
Philadelphia	30	12	11	7	31	87	88

Western Conference

Central Division									
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA		
St. Louis	32	21	9	2	44	104	81		
Winnipeg	31	18	8	4	41	107	87		
Nashville	29	17	10	2	40	95	84		
Minnesota	30	16	11	3	35	89	86		
Dallas	31	17	13	1	35	91	90		
Chicago	31	15	11	5	35	93	84		
Colorado	30	14	12	2	30	94	100		

Pacific Division

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Los Angeles	32	19	9	2	43	98	73
Vegas	29	16	10	3	40	105	94
San Jose	32	16	13	3	35	79	69
San Jose	31	16	12	3	35	93	81
Anaheim	31	13	11	7	33	83	91
Vancouver	31	14	13	4	32	93	101
Edmonton	31	13	16	2	28	93	101
Arizona	31	11	17	3	25	75	114

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Monday's games

Colorado 2, Pittsburgh 1: SO
Dallas 2, N.Y. Rangers 1, SO
N.Y. Islanders 3, Washington 1
Florida 2, Detroit 1, OT
New Jersey 5, New York Islanders 1
Anaheim 3, Carolina 2

Tuesday's games

Edmonton 3, Columbus 2
Buffalo 3, Ottawa 2
New Jersey 5, Toronto 2
Washington 5, Colorado 2
New Jersey 5, Los Angeles 1
Minnesota 2, Calgary 1, SO

Tampa Bay 3, St. Louis 0
San Jose 3, Florida 2, OT
Carolina 3, Vegas 2, SO

Wednesday's games

Dallas 4, New Jersey 1
Boston at Detroit
Nashville at Vancouver
Toronto at Boston
Buffalo at Philadelphia
New York Islanders at Columbus
Chicago at Winnipeg
Anaheim at St. Louis
Toronto at Minnesota
Dallas at Colorado
Tampa Bay at Arizona

Thursday's games

Nashville at Edmonton
Pittsburgh at Calgary
Florida at Vancouver
Dallas at New Jersey
Carolina at Buffalo
Los Angeles at N.Y. Rangers
Toronto at Detroit
San Jose at Vancouver

Friday's games

Calgary 1, Minnesota 0
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Minnesota 5, Tampa Bay 2
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1

Saturday's games

Calgary 1, Minnesota 0
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Minnesota 5, Tampa Bay 2
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1

Sunday's games

Calgary 1, Minnesota 0
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Minnesota 5, Tampa Bay 2
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1

Monday's games

Calgary 1, Minnesota 0
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Minnesota 5, Tampa Bay 2
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1

Tuesday's games

Calgary 1, Minnesota 0
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Minnesota 5, Tampa Bay 2
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1

Wednesday's games

Calgary 1, Minnesota 0
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Minnesota 5, Tampa Bay 2
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1

Thursday's games

Calgary 1, Minnesota 0
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Minnesota 5, Tampa Bay 2
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1

Friday's games

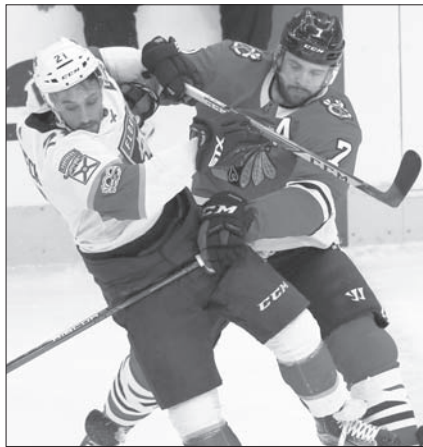
Calgary 1, Minnesota 0
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Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1

Saturday's games

Calgary 1, Minnesota 0
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Minnesota 5, Tampa Bay 2
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1

Sunday's games

Calgary 1, Minnesota 0
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Minnesota 5, Tampa Bay 2
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1
Edmonton 3, St. Louis 1



CHARLES RYERSON/AP

The Florida Panthers' Vincent Trocheck, left, and the Blackhawks' Brent Seabrook collide during the first period of Tuesday's game in Chicago. The Blackhawks won 3-2 in overtime.

Devils 5, Kings 1

Los Angeles 0 0 1-1
New Jersey 2 2 1-5
First Period—1, New Jersey, Zajac 3 (Coleman, Gibbons), 13:44. **2,** New Jersey, Hall 12 (Bratt, Butcher), 16:14 (pp.).
Second Period—3, New Jersey, Hall 13, 15:42. **4,** New Jersey, Boyle 7 (Hayes, Nosen), 17:04.
Third Period—5, Los Angeles, Mitchell 2 (MacDonald, Martinez), 12:04. **6,** New Jersey, Gibbons 13, 19:49 (sh.).
Shots on Goal—Los Angeles 5-6-6-17.
Power-play opportunities—Los Angeles 0 of 3; **New Jersey** 1 of 2.
Goals—Los Angeles, Quick 15-10-1 (26 shots-25 saves). **New Jersey,** Schneider 13-6-3 (17-16). **A-13,275 (16,514).** T-2:24.

Blackhawks 3, Panthers 2 (OT)

Florida 0 1 0-2
Chicago 1 0 1-3
First Period—1, Chicago, Saad 11 (DeBrincat, Toews), 16:49.
Second Period—1, Chicago, Bugdash 8 (Barlow, Pyatak), 11:12.
Third Period—3, Florida, McGinn 5 (Trocheck), 3:53. **4,** Chicago, Toews 9 (Saad, DeBrincat), 13:58.
Overtime—5, Chicago, Kane 11 (Anisimov), 2:04.
Shots on Goal—Florida 9-17-8-3-37. **Chicago** 5-12-2-26.
Power-play opportunities—Florida 0 of 2; **Chicago** 1 of 1.
Goals—Florida, Reimer 6-7-3 (28 shots-25 saves). **Chicago,** Crawford 13-7-2 (37-35). **T-2:38.**

Sabres 3, Senators 2

Ottawa 0 0 2-2
Buffalo 0 0 0-3
First Period—1, Buffalo, Pouliot 1 (Ristolainen, Scandellia), 4:13. **2,** Buffalo, Okposo 5 (Gorges, Reilly), 5:25. **3,** Buffalo, Laia 4 (Eichel, Ristolainen), 12:33 (pp.).
Second Period—1, Ottawa, Cecil 3 (Stone, Thompson), 6:43. **5,** Ottawa, Brassard 7 (Hoffman, Karlsson), 19:08.
Shots on Goal—Ottawa 6-13-7-26. **Buffalo** 5-10-16-25.
Power-play opportunities—Ottawa 0 of 3; **Buffalo** 1 of 2.
Goals—Ottawa, Condon 23-4 (25 shots-22 saves). **Buffalo,** Lehner 7-12-24 (26-37). **A-17,454 (19,070).** T-2:20.

Lightning 3, Blues 0

Tampa Bay 1 0 2-3
St. Louis 0 0 0-0
First Period—1, Tampa Bay, Point 13 (Killorn, Johnson), 19:15.
Second Period—2, Tampa Bay, Kucherov 2 (Genao, Point), 13:47. **3,** Tampa Bay, Johnson 7 (Hedman, Point), 19:38.
Third Period—1, Tampa Bay, Vasilevsky 20-41 (32 shots-32 saves). **St. Louis,** Allen 17-7-2 (24-22). **A-18,290 (19,150).** T-2:20.

Flyers 4, Maple Leafs 2

Toronto 0 0 1-2
Philadelphia 1 0 3-4
First Period—1, Philadelphia, Giroux 13 (Couturier, Sejt), 2:00. **Toronto,** Marleau 11 (Hyman, Hainey), 9:48.
Second Period—3, Toronto, van Riemsdyk 15 (Reilly, Marner), 16:50 (pp.).
Third Period—4, Philadelphia, Leier 2 (Konecny, Hagg), 5:58. **5,** Philadelphia, Couturier 15 (Simmonds, Giroux), 17:05. **6,** Philadelphia, Laughton 5 (Reilly), 19:44.
Shots on Goal—Toronto 6-7-9-22. **Philadelphia** 14-18-18-40.
Power-play opportunities—Toronto 1 of 1; **Philadelphia** 0 of 1.
Goals—Toronto, Andersen 17-8-1 (38 shots-35 saves). **Philadelphia,** Elliott 9-6-2 (22-20). **T-2:23.**

Capitals 5, Avalanche 2

Colorado 0 1 1-2
Washington 1 1 3-5
First Period—1, Washington, Vrana 9 (Nieto, Kuznetsov), 5:25.
Second Period—2, Colorado, Wilson 3 (Bowie, Barberio), 4:13. **3,** Washington, Carlson 3, 17:42.
Third Period—4, Washington, Connolly 6 (Kuznetsov), 5:15. **5,** Washington, Niskanen 2 (Burakovsky, Kuznetsov), 16:19. **6,** Colorado, Josi 2 (Rantanen, Sothmann), 18:57. **7,** Washington, Smith-Pelly 5 (Stephenson, Beagle), 19:12.
Shots on Goal—Colorado 7-6-11-24. **Washington** 7-10-10-27.
Power-play opportunities—Colorado 0 of 4; **Washington** 0 of 1.
Goals—Colorado, Varlamov 9-8-1 (26 shots-24 saves). **Washington,** Holtby 17-9-6 (24-22). **A-18,056 (18,777).** T-2:19.

Hurricanes 3, Golden Knights 2 (SO)

Carolina 1 1 0-3
Vegas 1 0 0-2
First Period—1, Carolina, Kruger 1, 16:25.
Second Period—2, Vegas, Engelland 3 (Haula, Perron), 12:07. **3,** Carolina, van Riemsdyk 1 (Skinner), 4:38. **4,** Vegas, Smith 3 (McNabb, Miller), 4:50. **5,** Carolina, McGinn 6 (D'Alejo, N.G.).
Shootout—Carolina 1-2. **Goals—Carolina,** Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **4,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **5,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **6,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **7,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **8,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **9,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **10,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **11,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **12,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **13,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **14,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **15,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **16,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **17,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **18,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **19,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **20,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **21,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **22,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **23,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **24,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **25,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **26,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **27,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **28,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **29,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **30,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **31,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **32,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **33,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **34,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **35,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **36,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **37,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **38,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **39,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **40,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **41,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **42,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **43,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **44,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **45,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **46,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **47,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **48,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **49,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **50,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **51,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **52,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **53,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **54,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **55,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **56,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **57,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **58,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **59,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **60,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **61,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **62,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **63,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **64,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **65,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **66,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **67,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **68,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **69,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **70,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **71,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **72,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **73,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **74,** Carolina, Smith 3 (Haula, N.G.), 12:07. **75,** Carolina, Smith

COLLEGE FOOTBALL/SPORTS BRIEFS



MARK WALLMEISER/AP

Willie Taggart is introduced as Florida State's new football coach last week. A potential new tax on seven-figure salaries for employees of non-profits hasn't deterred schools from doling out huge contracts to new coaches like Taggart, who is set to make \$5 million a year.

Coaches' salaries rise despite threat of a new excise tax

By BEN NUCKOLS

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A potential new tax on seven-figure salaries for employees of non-profits hasn't deterred schools from doling out huge contracts to new coaches.

Football powers aiming for a national title have continued to pay the market rate for proven coaches, topped by the 10-year, \$75 million deal for Jimbo Fisher at Texas A&M. If the GOP tax overhaul becomes law — perhaps before the end of the year — the school could be on the hook for \$15 million in new taxes over the life of that contract.

Both the House and Senate versions of the bill include a new 20 percent excise tax on salaries of \$1 million or more paid by universities and other nonprofits. Universities also would take a financial hit from the elimination of a tax deduction for the donations that many schools require for the right to purchase season tickets. Donors currently get to deduct 80 percent of those contributions. Without the tax break, giving could plummet.

How schools would absorb those costs is an open question. But economists and other experts say an excise tax is not the best way to drive down coaches' salaries or combat the widespread public perception they are overpaid.

In its most recent survey, USA Today found 78 football coaches and 41 men's basketball coaches making \$1 million or more, topped by Nick Saban's \$11.1 million salary at Alabama. If the tax proposal does become law, Alabama would face a \$2.24 million tax bill every year.

"Right now, there's so much uncertainty," Alabama athletic director Greg Byrne told The Associated Press. "All we know is, it's going to have an impact."

Many schools are taking a similar wait-and-see approach, at most doing some preliminary number-crunching about the potential impact on their budgets.

In the meantime, coaches continue to get eye-popping contracts. Twelve Power Five schools hired new coaches this year — including Mississippi, which gave a four-year deal to interim coach Matt Luke — and the lowest annual salary among that crop is \$1.9 million.

Eight of the 12 schools are paying their new coaches less than their predecessors. But most of those who are making less are either first-time head coaches or have thinner résumés than the men they replaced. For highly coveted coaches, salaries continue to grow.

Willie Taggart, for example, will make \$5 million annually. Florida State, which is \$700,000 less than Fisher made before he left for Texas A&M. That still makes Taggart one of the dozen highest-paid coaches in the country. Also new to the \$5 million-a-year club are Dan Mullen at Florida (\$6.1 million) and Scott Frost at Nebraska (\$5 million). Chip Kelly will make \$4.66 million a year at UCLA, a hike of more than \$1 million over predecessor Jim Mora.

Texas A&M stressed that no public funds will be used to pay Fisher's salary. But the tax bill doesn't make any distinctions about where the money comes from.

Tom McMillen, a former Democratic congressman from Maryland who is now the CEO of the Lead1 Association, which represents Division I athletic directors, doesn't expect the new tax to drive down salaries.

"Certainly our schools, if they have to choose between a great football team and getting a coach that's going to deliver that and making cuts elsewhere, they're probably going to make cuts elsewhere," McMillen said.

The hit on universities from getting rid of the season-ticket tax deduction and adding the salary tax will be in the hundreds of millions of dollars annually, McMillen said, and he believes Olympic sports subsidized by football and

basketball revenue likely will be affected the most.

But John Colombo, a University of Illinois law professor who has studied the economics of college sports, said cuts to other programs "would have to be done on the sly" to avoid an outcry from faculty. He said schools most likely would raise ticket prices or hit up their donors, arguing that more money is necessary "to stay competitive."

"The way to deal with football coaches' salaries is to turn college athletics back into an amateur sport played by real students on the side, not a minor league for the pros," Colombo wrote in an email. "Maybe Congress ought to spend some time thinking about how to make that happen instead of adopting indiscriminate policies that make no sense at all."

Coaches will still have plenty of leverage when negotiating their salaries. Larry Hutcher, a New York-based attorney who has represented wealthy clients including Charles Barkley, predicted schools and coaches would structure contracts creatively in an effort to mitigate the tax burden and exploit possible loopholes in the new law.

In the case of contracts that have already been signed, schools will have to scrounge up the money somehow. Keith Mann, the assistant athletic director for communications at Nebraska, said the potential \$1 million a year tax on Frost's salary would be drawn from "operating revenues such as ticket sales, sponsorships [and] conference distributions." The money would not come out of donations or university funds, he said.

Nebraska is one of many schools watching nervously as the tax bill takes its final shape in negotiations between the Senate and the House.

"This is happening really quickly," Washington athletic director Jennifer Cohen said. "I'm not sure any of us are well prepared to figure out how to manage."

Briefly

Twins sign Pineda to 2-year contract

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The Minnesota Twins have signed former New York Yankees starting pitcher Michael Pineda, giving a two-year, \$10 million contract to the right-hander recovering from Tommy John surgery.

The move made Wednesday by the Twins during baseball's winter meetings was more for 2019, when Pineda will earn \$8 million. He'll get \$2 million for the 2018 season, which he'll likely miss while continuing the rehab following elbow ligament replacement.

Pineda's procedure was performed July 18. The typical timetable for Tommy John patients to return to the mound is between 12 and 18 months.

Once among the promising prospects, the 28-year-old Pineda went 8-4 with a 4.39 ERA in 17 starts for the Yankees last season.

Report: Ohtani has UCL damage in pitching arm

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Japan's two-way superstar Shohei Ohtani, whose signing with the Los Angeles Angels last week was hailed as a game-changer for that franchise, reportedly has an injured ligament in his pitching elbow that, while not considered immediately dire, required a platelet-rich plasma shot in October and could portend more serious problems down the road.

According to a report late Tuesday by Yahoo Sports, which cited the results of a physical exam Ohtani underwent in Tokyo in late November, the injury is characterized as a first-degree sprain of his right (throwing) ulnar collateral ligament. Although a first-degree sprain is considered mild, further damage could require ligament-replacement surgery.

For now, Ohtani is not considered a candidate for surgery. The PRP shot, in which centrifuge-spun blood is returned to the body to promote healing, was performed Oct. 20, according to Yahoo. While elbow injuries are common among pitchers, a PRP shot indicates a higher level of concern. In addition, Yahoo reported, Ohtani has a "small free body" — probably a bone chip — floating near his UCL.

Ohtani, a 23-year-old who is both a right-handed pitcher and left-handed slugger with impeccable credentials in Japan, was posted by his Japanese team, the Nippon Ham Fighters, earlier this month, and after a thorough vetting process, last week chose to sign with the Angels.

Tour de France champ Froome fails drug test

PARIS — Chris Froome failed a doping test during the Spanish

Vuelta in September and is facing suspension from the sport ahead of his attempt to win a record-equaling fifth Tour de France title next year.

Froome won his fourth Tour title this year and followed it with a victory at the Vuelta. But Team Sky said Wednesday that Froome, who has not been suspended, had a concentration of asthma drug salbutamol two times higher than the World Anti-Doping Agency's permitted levels.

Team Sky said it has been informed by the International Cycling Union that the urine test was taken on Sept. 7, during the three-week Spanish Vuelta.

Froome's use of asthma medication has been well documented, and the Kenyan-born rider has often been spotted using inhalers in the peloton. He has repeatedly faced questions on whether he is a clean rider, especially during the Tour de France, and has always denied wrongdoing.

If found guilty of doping, the 32-year-old Froome could be suspended for a long period.

Sounders get flexibility with new Dempsey deal

TUKWILA, Wash. — The Seattle Sounders will have Clint Dempsey when they try to make it to a third straight MLS Cup final.

Seattle general manager Garth Lagerwey confirmed Tuesday that the club has signed Dempsey to a six-year deal for the 2018 season that will keep the forward with the Sounders while giving the team greater salary flexibility. Having the improved flexibility is important for Lagerwey as the Sounders try to build a roster that can chase a third straight Western Conference title in 2018.

Lagerwey did not get into specifics about Dempsey's deal but did confirm he will be a designated player for Seattle and that the contract is only for 2018.

Robitaille's wife tweets on Trump encounter

NEW YORK — The wife of Hall of Fame hockey player Luc Robitaille has tweeted about an encounter with Donald Trump more than two decades ago in an elevator at Madison Square Garden.

Stacia Robitaille wrote Monday on Twitter that Trump "was aggressive & told me I was coming home with him. I laughed, stating I was married to a Ranger. He guaranteed me my husband didn't make as much money as him. #ThisIsOurPresident."

Luc Robitaille was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2009. He currently is president of the Los Angeles Kings.

NFL



CHARLIE RIEDEL/AP

Oakland Raiders linebacker Nicholas Morrow, left, closes in on Kansas City Chiefs running back Kareem Hunt during the first half Sunday. Hunt rushed for 116 yards and a touchdown in the 26-15 victory.

Back on track

Chiefs rookie RB Hunt bounces back in key West win

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Kareem Hunt's eyes must have gotten wide when he took a handoff from Alex Smith and plunged toward the line of scrimmage in the first half of Sunday's game against the Oakland Raiders.

For once, he didn't have a massive defensive tackle ready to give him a bear hug.

Hunt wound up slicing past the line of scrimmage for a 6-yard gain, a modest success by some standards but a run that must have felt like freedom.

It was a third of his total two weeks ago against Buffalo, and set the tone for what would be a massive bounce-back performance.

Hunt wound up rushing for 116 yards and a touchdown, and caught three passes for 22 yards, to help the Chiefs to a 26-15 victory in a crucial showdown for the AFC West race.

"Honestly, I would feel this way if we win no matter what my numbers look like. It is just huge to get out there and get a big-time win and keep it going," said Hunt, who had not eclipsed the 100-yard mark since a Week 5 win in Houston. "Now we just have to keep doing what we are doing."

It wasn't just a bounce-back performance for Hunt, or second. The victory snapped a four-game skid and put the Chiefs in solid position with the Chargers coming to town Saturday night.

Those teams were 7-6 and tied atop the AFC West.

The Chiefs won their first meeting in Los Angeles, and Hunt was a big reason why. The rookie with the wide smile and never-go-down attitude churned 17 times for 172 yards and the clinching touchdown in a 24-10 victory, one of many highlights during what became a 5-0 start.

Things soon began to get sideways for Hunt and the Chiefs, though.

Injuries along the offensive line hurt chemistry. Defenses began to stack the box to take away the defensive first-year player.

Balance went out of the offense and a group flying high after wins over New England and Philadelphia had ground to a halt.

Hunt was held to 21 yards in a loss to Pittsburgh. He gained 87 yards against Oakland and 46 against Denver. He managed 37 against Dallas and 73 in a loss to the Giants, when the Chiefs failed to score a touchdown.

There was the lousy performance in Buffalo and a struggle two weeks ago against the Jets, when he gained 40 yards on nine carries in a 38-31 defeat.

All the while, the Chiefs kept going to him.

It was only a matter of time, quarterback Alex Smith said, until Hunt broke loose again.

He finally did on Sunday. And even though he didn't have any of those long touchdown runs that were a hallmark of his first few games, Hunt consistently felt forward, giving the Chiefs positive yardage just about every time he touched the ball.

"We mixed it up. Certainly when we got into the meat of the game, I think you saw a little more with that," Smith said. "Be able to take our shots there with Kareem and I thought he ran hard."

He also resumed his charge at the Chiefs' record book.

Hunt has 1,046 yards, joining the late Joe Delaney as the only Chiefs running backs to crack the 1,000-yard barrier as a rookie. Delaney ran for 1,121 yards in 1981, and like Hunt, he had five 100-yard rushing performances that season.

Hunt's total already ranks 15th in franchise history, and he needs just 242 yards over the final three games to pass Jamaal Charles for the eighth-best season.

Hunt has five touchdowns rushing and two receiving, and needs just two touchdowns to pass Mike Garrett and Johnny Robinson for fourth-most among Chiefs rookies.

Hunt has cracked 218 times this season, second-most by a rookie in franchise history.

"It's a huge accomplishment," he said of hitting the 1,000-yard mark, which he realized when the astute video board operators showed a graphic at Arrowhead Stadium.

"Nobody can ever take that away from you, and I just want to thank those guys up front. They did a great job."

Weekly statistics

AFC individual leaders

Week 14				
Quarterbacks	Att	Com	Yds	TD Int
Brady, NE	481	324	3865	27 13
Rodriguez, PIT	502	298	3744	24 13
Rivers, LAC	462	290	3611	23 7
Al. Smith, KC	436	293	3507	23 3
D. Carr, OAK	420	268	2942	18 10
McCown, NYJ	397	267	2926	18 7
Bortles, JAC	417	247	2821	16 10
Dalton, CIN	389	236	2747	21 9
Brissett, IND	381	228	2611	11 7
Mariota, TEN	362	224	2582	10 10
Rushers				
Belk, PIT	283	105	39	27 7
K. Hunt, KC	218	104	46	68 5
McCoy, BUF	239	100	42	48 5
Fournette, JAC	231	923	4,900	8
M. Gordon, LAC	229	853	3,671	6
A. Collins, BAL	162	825	51	50 5
L. Miller, HOU	211	764	36	21 3
Gore, IND	210	762	36	21 3
Crowell, LAC	174	716	41	37 2
C.J. Anderson, DEN	181	700	39	40 2
Receivers				
A. Brown, PIT	99	1509	15.2	57 9
D. Hopkins, HOU	88	1233	14.0	72 11
K. Allen, LAC	84	1143	13.8	51 5
T. Hill, KC	64	986	15.4	79 6
A. Green, CIN	65	950	14.6	77 8
Kelce, KC	73	945	12.9	44 5
Cooks, NE	54	924	17.1	64 5
Gronkowski, NE	55	849	15.4	53 5
R. Anderson, NYJ	52	848	16.3	69 7
T. Hilton, IND	43	811	18.9	80 4
Punters				
Kern, TEN	60	3089	74	51.5
Lechler, HOU	70	3446	68	49.2
Kasper, LAC	60	2932	69	48.9
B. Colquett, CLE	63	3056	67	48.5
M. King, OAK	57	2745	65	48.2
Belk, PIT	68	3242	63	47.7
L. Edwards, NYJ	71	3317	70	46.7
Dixon, DEN	63	2901	60	46.0
Koch, BAL	60	3146	60	45.8
Sanchez, IND	73	3291	61	45.1
Punt Returns				
Mickens, JAC	18	236	13.1	72 1
Campanaro, BAL	19	249	13.1	77 1
Tate, BUF	17	177	10.4	40 0
T. Benjamin, LAC	22	243	9.7	65 1
A. Jackson, TEN	27	259	9.6	46 0
Amendola, NE	20	177	8.8	40 0
T. Hill, KC	23	204	8.8	80 0
McKenzie, DEN	21	183	8.7	47 0
Erickson, CIN	32	238	7.4	29 0
J. Grant, MIA	21	145	6.9	27 0
Kickoff Returns				
D. Lewis, NE	17	453	26.6	103 1
A. Hunt, KC	19	460	24.2	42 0
Bray, IND	18	430	23.9	60 0
J. Grant, MIA	18	410	22.8	31 0
T. Roberts, TEN	21	448	21.8	37 0
Erickson, CIN	27	575	21.3	57 0
Tate, BUF	22	527	20.8	29 0
Touchdowns				
D. Hopkins, HOU	11	0	11	66
Oakland	10	0	10	64
A. Brown, PIT	9	0	9	56
Belk, PIT	9	0	9	54
Fournette, JAC	9	0	9	54
A. Green, CIN	8	0	8	48
Landry, MIA	8	0	8	48
Kicking				
Gostkowski, PIT	37	38	31.34	62 130
Boswell, PIT	26	28	32.35	53 122
Tucker, LAC	25	27	31.65	50 147
Soccol, TEN	27	28	32.35	52 105
Oakland	25	27	31.65	50 147
Cattanzaro, NYJ	27	27	31.25	57 90
Hausschka, BUF	24	24	32.25	56 90
Tennessee	22	22	31.88	54 90
Fairbairn, HOU	30	33	31.23	55 90
Vinatieri, IND	18	20	32.25	53 84

Week 14				
Quarterbacks	Att	Com	Yds	TD Int
Stewart, DET	408	307	3683	23 9
Brees, NOR	402	315	3569	19 10
R. Wilson, SEA	473	293	3527	29 11
Cousins, WAS	440	290	3440	22 9
B. Ryan, ARI	417	287	3383	18 10
Wentz, PHI	404	265	3296	33 7
B. Ryan, ATL	417	267	3278	17 11
Keenum, MIN	404	270	2983	18 7
Prescott, DAL	399	252	2752	21 9
Newton, CAR	402	270	2720	17 12
Rushers				
Gurley, LA	236	1035	4.4	36 10
J. Howard, CHI	235	1034	4.4	37 7
Ingram, NOR	192	971	5.1	72 9
E. Elliott, DAL	191	783	4.1	61 5
Hyde, SEA	188	771	4.1	61 5
Bolt, PHI	152	696	4.6	68 2
D. Freeman, ARI	152	680	4.5	44 5
Stewart, CAR	180	634	3.5	60 6
Kamara, NOR	87	608	7.0	74 5
T. Coleman, ARI	139	593	4.3	52 5
Receivers				
Thielen, MIN	90	1161	14.5	65 4
A. Jones, ATL	73	1161	15.5	53 4
Mic. Thomas, NOR	85	992	11.7	38 4
Fitzgerald, ARI	87	922	10.6	37 6
M. Jones, DET	51	885	12.7	35 4
Baldwin, SEA	66	860	10.3	54 5
Tate, DET	79	852	10.8	49 4
D. Adams, GBY	69	826	12.0	55 1
Kupp, LA	56	783	14.0	64 4
A. Brown, IND	41	763	18.1	63 1
Punters				
Hekker, LA	49	2359	70	48.1
Mostard, NOR	46	2182	68	47.4
O'Donnell, CHI	62	3139	69	46.8
A. Lee, ARI	70	3260	60	46.6
Palfrey, SEA	67	3143	60	46.3
O. Jones, PHI	48	2213	62	46.1
Vogel, GBY	57	2573	62	45.1
Bohler, PHI	32	1947	59	44.9
J. Ryan, SEA	68	3043	74	44.8
Wing, NYJ	67	2815	70	44.9
Punt Returns				
Agnew, DET	22	270	13.6	88 2
P. Cooper, LA	22	262	11.9	40 0
T. Davis, GBY	12	199	11	38 0
Shields, MIN	26	269	10.3	46 0
G. Smith, PHI	21	211	10.0	44 0
Cohen, CHI	24	230	9.6	61 1
Switzer, DAL	21	197	9.4	83 0
T. Taylor, SFO	20	182	9.4	81 0
A. Roberts, ATL	18	137	7.6	27 0
McCaffrey, CAR	20	174	7.4	29 0
Kickoff Returns				
Switzer, DAL	20	519	26.0	61 0
P. Cooper, LA	20	519	26.0	61 0
Lockett, SEA	17	475	25	0 0
T. Davis, GBY	25	601	24.0	34 0
Cohen, CHI	21	507	23.7	46 0
B. Ryan, SEA	22	707	22.7	46 0
Bolden, SFO	19	396	20.8	27 0
Touchdowns				
Gurley, LA	13	10	3	0 78
Kamara, NOR	11	7	4	0 68
D. Adams, GBY	9	0	9	0 54
E. Elliott, DAL	9	0	9	0 54
Ingram, NOR	9	0	9	0 54
Jeffery, PHI	8	0	8	0 54
Kupp, LA	8	0	8	0 54
M. Jones, DET	8	0	8	0 48
Kicking				
Zuerlein, LA	36	36	31.31	63 135
Lutz, NOR	38	41	26.31	53 116
M. Bryant, ATL	30	30	30.26	50 108
Gould, SFO	30	30	30.26	50 108
Prater, DET	33	34	29.59	58 108
Wentz, PHI	33	33	30.26	50 108
Jak. Elliott, PHI	34	37	22.26	61 100
Gano, CAR	28	30	34.27	48 100
Walsh, ARI	30	30	30.26	50 108
Dawson, ARI	19	21	22.30	57 85

Kickoff Returners					
	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD
Stewart, NE	17	453	26.6	103†	1
Wentz, KC	19	460	24.2	42	0
Newton, IND	18	430	23.9	60	0
Wentz, MIA	18	410	22.8	31	0
McCoy, TEN	21	448	21.3	48	0
McCoy, CIN	27	575	21.3	41	0
McCoy, BUF	22	457	20.8	29	0

NFL

Rodgers cleared to return

Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Aaron Rodgers has been “medically cleared to return” to action after missing seven games with a broken right collarbone, the Green Bay Packers quarterback announced on Instagram Tuesday night.

Rodgers was hurt during a loss to Minnesota on Oct. 15 and had surgery four days later. He returned to practice on Dec. 2 and is eligible to rejoin the 53-man roster on Friday, which means the two-time MVP could suit up for Green Bay’s game at Carolina on Sunday.

“It’s been a long road ... but I’m happy to say I’ve been medically cleared to return,” Rodgers wrote on Tuesday night. “Thanks for all the love, support, prayers and well wishes over the past 8 weeks and a big thank you to Dr. (Pat) McKenzie and our incredible training staff.”

The Packers (7-6) likely need to win their final three games to make the playoffs.

Rodgers had his collarbone scanned on Monday morning. That afternoon, with the team in the middle of game-planning for Carolina, coach Mike McCarthy was unsure whether Rodgers or backup Brett



RICK SCUTEN/AP

The Packers were 4-2 when quarterback Aaron Rodgers was sidelined with a broken collarbone. They went 3-4 without him.

Hundley would be his quarterback.

“I’d like to know as soon as possible,” McCarthy said. “Frankly, it’s best for Aaron to know as soon as possible. He’s the one that has to get ready and, obviously, in his mind he’s ready to go if you watch him practice and the conversations with him. But this is a medical decision and Dr. McKenzie is in touch with a number of different medical experts and they’re evaluating the information.”

Those meetings ran deep into Tuesday before a conclusion was reached.

The Packers were 4-2 in Rodgers’ six starts, including the Minnesota game, where he was hurt on the second possession on a hit by Vikings linebacker Anthony Barr. In the three prior games, he threw 10 touchdown passes with only one interception in consecutive victories over Cincinnati, Chicago and Dallas.

After playing the Panthers, who at 9-4

are in position for the top NFC wild card, the Packers have a rematch against NFC North-leading Minnesota before finishing the season at Detroit. Green Bay’s final three opponents have a combined record of 26-13.

The Packers went 3-4 in Hundley’s seven starts, including back-to-back overtime wins over Tampa Bay and Cleveland that kept their playoff hopes alive and made Rodgers’ return a tantalizing possibility.

Recharged: Rivers threw career-worst 21 interceptions last season

FROM BACK PAGE

While the Chargers have an increasingly impressive defense and several offensive playmakers, the quarterback with the three-hour daily commute from San Diego is the engine driving them toward the postseason.

“We’ve been on a good little run the last few weeks,” Chargers offensive coordinator Ken Whisenhunt said Monday. “A lot of it has to do with Philip and the way he’s playing.”

During the Chargers’ winning streak, Rivers has 1,348 yards passing with eight touchdowns and four straight passer ratings over 100. He also hasn’t committed a turnover during that four-game stretch, the longest turnover-free streak of his entire career.

“He’s unstoppable,” said receiver Tyrell Williams, who caught a beautiful 75-yard TD pass from Rivers on Sunday. “I don’t even have a word for him. He’s just playing great. I know he’s going to keep doing what he’s doing, and if he keeps playing like that, we’re going to be a hard team to beat.”

Not bad for a quarterback who threw a career-worst 21 interceptions last season and then wondered if the end of his Chargers career was near when they started 0-4 in their relocation season.

“(There were) a lot of different emotions,” Rivers recalled Sunday. “A little bit of, ‘You’ve got to be kidding me! Could it be any worse right now? We moved up the road. We’re lost four in a row. Is this my last 12 games here?’ You have all of those thoughts.”

Instead, the Chargers have won four straight home games while moving about .500 for the first time since September



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

Quarterback Philip Rivers has thrown for 1,348 yards and eight touchdowns during the Los Angeles Chargers’ current four-game winning streak.

2015. They’ve also given themselves the chance to be the first NFL team since the 1992 San Diego Chargers to make the playoffs after starting 0-4.

A win in Kansas City would put the Chargers on an inside track to their first division title since 2009, the last of four straight AFC West champions led by LaDainian Tomlinson, Antonio Gates and Rivers.

“While it’s been real exciting, we’ve

been right here before on the cusp, and we lose the last two or three, and you end up a game out,” Rivers said. “While everybody is excited and feeling pretty good about what we’ve done to get back in it, we’ve got to make sure nobody relaxes. ... You hear all this positive stuff about the Chargers now, but we have to make sure we continue to move forward like we have been.”

In some previous seasons in San Diego, Rivers and the Chargers got off to outstand-

ing starts before fading down the stretch, either due to nagging injuries or slumping performances by a team that has made the playoffs once since 2009.

This season has been something different: Rivers completed just 63.3 percent of his passes and made five turnovers during the 0-4 start, only to improve steadily as the season progressed.

Rivers has moved up to fourth in the NFL with 3,611 yards passing, behind only Ben Roethlisberger, Tom Brady and Matthew Stafford. His 23 touchdown passes are fifth in the league, and he has thrown only seven interceptions all season — just three in the past 10 games.

Most importantly, Rivers and his offense are playing with palpable confidence while winning seven of their past nine games overall. Rivers said he felt good about the Chargers’ chances against the Redskins after just one look at their scripted plays for the start of the game.

Although he has never been the NFL’s most nimble quarterback, Rivers has been remarkably adept at avoiding rushes and blitzes in recent weeks. He was sacked twice by the Redskins, but avoided trouble on several additional plays.

He didn’t show that caution while leading the blocking for Travis Benjamin on a reverse running play in the second half, however. Although Rivers didn’t end up hitting anybody, that play still sent shivers up the spines of Whisenhunt and head coach Anthony Lynn one day later.

“He looked like a parade master going down the field,” Whisenhunt said. “I would have preferred if he had just gone ahead and run out of bounds so he could just get out of the action.”

SPORTS



On the move?
Orioles' Machado may switch
positions – or teams » **MLB, Page 27**

NFL



Quarterback Philip Rivers hasn't committed a turnover during the Chargers' four-game winning streak.

Denis Poroy/AP

RECHARGED

Chargers' Rivers enjoying resurgence

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

DEEP in his 12th season as the Chargers' starting quarterback, Philip Rivers is playing some of his best football. In his first game since turning 36 years old, Rivers carved up the Washington Redskins' sec-

ondary on the way to 319 yards and two touchdowns in Los Angeles' 30-13 victory Sunday.

That blowout win was just the latest big game in Rivers' string of savvy performances for the Chargers (7-6), who have won four straight heading into Saturday's showdown with Kansas City (7-6) for first place in the AFC West.

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MICHAEL AINSWORTH/AP

At 36, Philip Rivers is playing some of his best football.

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